

# Education Action



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Further information on all projects available from Balaraba at ActionAid Nigeria.

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# Editorial

Dear reader

Welcome to the 20th edition of *Education Action*. We have now been going for 10 years at an average of two editions a year, publishing in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, with over 5,000 copies read in over 100 countries.

This edition has a new editorial team, led by Balaraba Aliyu in Nigeria, who is helped by Victorine Djitrinou Kemonou in South Africa and Akanksha Marphatia, Tania Boler and David Archer in the UK. An overview of the new structure of ActionAid's education work can be found in the article 'Convening our Core Education Resource' part of the Global Updates.

The past few weeks have been a difficult time for us all, with terrible news from Nigeria, India and Uganda. Chinwuba Egbe, ActionAid's lead education coordinator in Nigeria and Justice Egware from the national education coalition CSACEFA lost their lives in a plane crash from Lagos to Abuja. Then Uma Pandey, a dedicated *Reflect* practitioner died prematurely in India.

Finally we heard the news that James Kanyesigye, the coordinator of the first ever *Reflect* pilot project (in Bundibugyo, Uganda), affectionately known as "Papa Pamoja" (for his leading role in the Africa *Reflect* network), is hospitalised in Kampala with paralysis of his lower body.

We dedicate this magazine to these remarkable people who have all fought for the right to education. Tributes to Chinwuba, Justice and Uma are included at the back of this edition.

In the rest of the magazine we have expanded coverage and renewed focus on Education For All. We capture stories of innovative campaigning work from India to The Gambia, from Ghana to the USA, as well as creative approaches to accountability, mobilisation and transformation in education from many more countries. Learning from a mid-term review of the Commonwealth Education Fund helps to place this work in a wider context.

There are details of three recent publications produced by ActionAid and the Global Campaign for Education: 'Deadly Inertia' (on education responses to HIV/AIDS),

'Contradicting Commitments' (on how the IMF undermines progress on education) and 'Writing the Wrongs' (international benchmarks on adult literacy). There are details of the GCE mobilisation during 2005, especially in the build up to the G8 in Edinburgh and the UN Summit in New York. We also provide an overview of plans for the Global Action Week 2006.

Two articles introduce critical issues around the WTO and education: exploring the impact on basic education of the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the threats presented by intellectual property rights and copyright law.

Meanwhile, Katarina Tomasevski, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, introduces her latest work, 'Fee or Free?'. And David Archer reports on the progress of the most comprehensive evaluation ever of the World Bank's investments in primary education.

Two articles look at the important role of education in disasters. First we hear from Sri Lanka and the response following the Tsunami. Second, we outline plans for work across seven countries in the coming years to look at the critical role of schools in promoting disaster risk reduction.

The role of education in responding to HIV/AIDS is also a major theme. Tania Boler looks critically at approaches to life skills education, whilst Tom Muzoora provides an update of work on fusing *Stepping Stones* and *Reflect*.

There are fewer articles on *Reflect* though, Zaki Hasan gives new insights on the development of *Reflect* in Bangladesh and more widely across Asia, whilst we also celebrate the Sudanese women who are the latest winners of the UN Literacy Prize.

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# The Orissa Education Campaign

## Civil Society Organizations Fight for Children's Right to Education

by Sweta Jain and Ambika Prasad Nanda

Even though India is the largest democracy in the world, more than 40 per cent of the total population is illiterate. Orissa is one of the five states with the most profound development challenges, with 46 per cent of the total population living below poverty line. The gross enrolment ratio in the early grades of primary school is low, at just 72 per cent, and this falls to a shocking 44 per cent in upper primary schools. Children drop out at an alarming rate (in upper primary school, over 60 per cent of girls drop out), and those who stay on seem to learn very little (studies of learner achievement show abysmally low results, especially in rural areas, for poor students and for girls). It is estimated that 15 per cent of the child population in the 5–14 age group in Orissa are working as child labourers.

In this context, the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF, see article on page 6) initiated a campaign in Orissa to activate government schools. With local partners Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD) and the Forum against Child Exploitation (FACE) the campaign aims to create awareness of the government's Education For All plan (Sarva Sikshya Abhiyaan). It started modestly with focused work in 10 schools, one each in 10 backward districts of Orissa, looking to mobilise communities to demand proper implementation of existing government plans. In each district, one partner organization was identified and was provided with support to carry forward the campaign with guidance from CCWD and ActionAid.

The campaign proved to be a successful way of re-constituting and re-activating malfunctioning Village Education Committees (VECs) and even forming some new committees where none had previously existed. It showed the value of linking pressure for improvements in primary school to pressure for greater investment in pre-school (3–6 year olds) through the Integrated Child Development scheme. The campaign succeeded in removing blocks in infrastructure development as well as in securing appointments of new teachers where needed. Transparency of schools was a particular focus with all schools involved putting up public displays of information regarding the income and expenditure of schools.



David San Millan/ActionAid

After this successful pilot work in 10 schools in 10 tribal districts of Orissa, the campaign scaled up to more than 300 schools in 19 districts of Orissa. More than 32 partners joined together to develop a common platform for the scale up, all agreeing to the following minimum agenda to facilitate universalisation of school education:

- **Universalisation of Access:** Support excluded and disadvantaged groups, especially tribal and dalit children, girls, and children with disabilities, in gaining access to quality education.

- **Facilitating Governance:** Strengthen citizens' participation in education governance, through initiatives such as building the capacities of key institutions around the schools, e.g. Village Education Committees and Parent Teacher Associations.
- **Rights in Education:** Promote the rights of all learners within education systems and ensure that both boys and girls understand child rights and human rights. Work to eliminate discrimination and violence in schools and society at large.
- **Rights to Education:** Advocate and campaign for legal rights to education and the enforcement of these (e.g. using the constitutional amendment on primary education).
- **Education for All:** Work with coalitions and networks to advocate and campaign for educational policies and practices that promote the right of education for all, including pre-school children.

The organizations that came together for this scaled up work called themselves the 'Orissa Education Campaign'. The objective of the campaign is to use community mobilization to activate existing government schools so that they deliver quality education to all children. Strategies to achieve this goal include:

- Mobilizing political will at the grassroots level – to make education a live issue.
- Facilitating knowledge management processes to ensure good governance.
- Building alliances with teachers' and other trade unions and civil society organizations.
- Intervening to demonstrate innovative models and processes.

The first step in many cases was collection of *baseline information* from 493 villages and 335 schools, covering 50,000 households. The analysis of this baseline data played a key role in giving the campaign a credible basis for its work. The next

step was the mobilization of political will at the village level. To achieve this, village level consultations took place where ActionAid and other partners opened up a discussion about education and the status of the children. The aim was to make the invisible child visible and to motivate the community to take up education as an issue for local children. In practice, youth, women self help groups and other village level institutions came forward, putting pressure in turn on the Panchayat Raj Institutions (local governance structures) to take up education issues at the appropriate level.

The ongoing government Education For All initiative, Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan (SSA), claims that it reaches all children. However, the survey carried out by the Orissa Education Campaign highlighted the fact that many children remain out of school and that in some parts of Orissa the majority of children remain completely untouched by SSA. By raising awareness of government promises through the survey and consultations, the Orissa Education Campaign has helped communities in some districts to demand new schools and new investment from the government.

Another strategy was the organisation of *Sikshya Satyagraha* – ‘A Quest for Truth in the field of Education’ in each district and also at the State level. This was a place where information from the baseline survey and community consultations could be shared more widely. This process motivated lots of parents, teachers, community leaders and civil society organizations to come forward. In some cases there were massive demonstrations and public rallies to demand better educational facilities for all the children.

One highlight of the popular mobilization work was on Teachers Day in October 2005. The day was marked by the release of a white paper called ‘*School Education in Orissa – the sacrificial lamb for fiscal reform in the state of Orissa*’, written by Professor Abani Baral, president of the teacher’s unions in Orissa. Popular information

materials and leaflets about the status of education in Orissa, present budgetary provisions and shortfalls, backed up this serious policy paper. There was a passionate demand made for more financial allocations to provide quality education to all children.

A key part of the partnership behind the Orissa Education Campaign has been the link between NGOs and teachers’ unions. This partnership has been key both in public mobilisation and in putting pressure on government for more budgetary allocations. Until this campaign took off the teachers’ union used to fight only for improvements in their own pay and conditions. This is now beginning to

**By raising awareness of government promises through the survey and consultations, the Orissa Education Campaign has helped communities in some districts to demand new schools and new investment from government.**

change as it becomes clear that both teachers and children gain from greater investment in education as a whole. The partnership has also enabled sensitive issues, such as irregular teacher attendance in remote areas, to be addressed in practical ways.

The role of the media was recognized early on in this campaign and efforts were made to build a rights-based understanding of education with key media people. Various consultations and training programmes have been organized to influence media reporting on child rights and on the issues of education in Orissa. This has resulted in good media reporting at the local as well as at the state level, facilitating accountability of teachers and education administrators.

The CEF has now supported the Orissa Education Campaign to build a legislature’s forum on

Although market terminology is not ideal for this, the coming together of the voice of ‘producers’ (teachers) and ‘consumers’ (children and parents) creates a formidable political force in any context. Where national campaigns/alliances on basic education have succeeded in building a strong partnership between NGOs and unions, the impact has been dramatic. This is why ActionAid International is now committed to deepening its partnership with teachers’ unions in every country. A joint project with Education International (the international federation of teachers’ unions) aims to take this forward as a major priority in 2006. For further information contact: Victorine Kemonou Djitrinou

education at the state level to carry forward the policy level debate onto the floor of the assembly. Members of the Legislative Assembly from both ruling and opposition parties have come together for this work. The engagement and ownership of education issues by political leaders has clearly impacted at field level in some communities which have seen more investment in education and the resolution of some problems.

The key to success is working with all stakeholders – so that there are links from village levels to the State Assembly. The aim is to shift public discourse and to embed the idea that development will only be sustainable when all citizens are educated. The *Orissa Education Campaign* wants to put children’s lives right at the centre of public concern and to push education high up the agenda for public investment. The seeds of this work have been sown and we are already harvesting some results.

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# Implementing a flexible school calendar: The Gambian experience

by Kadijatou Baldeh

The Gambia Teachers' Union, Parent Teachers' Association and the Education For All Secretariat in the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with ActionAid The Gambia have embarked on designing a flexible calendar for schools. The rationale is to enable children from rural areas to attend school regularly, thereby increasing contact hours. It is also hoped that this will boost enrolment and retention at the basic cycle level (Grades 1–9). Empowering parents, teachers and pupils to participate in designing the school calendar fits within a wider spirit of decentralisation and should increase people's sense of ownership of schools.

Although the Education Policy 2004–2015 made a commitment to a flexible calendar (see box), there is nothing in this policy which states how this flexible calendar should be produced and who should lead this process. The Gambia Teachers' Union in consultation with the Parent Teachers' Association approached ActionAid for a partnership to ensure the realisation of this initiative. The Education for All Secretariat were also closely involved.

Cluster-based focus group discussions were held at each of the Regional Education Directorate levels (RED 1–6) and a national consensus-building debate ensued.

The starting point was to organize cluster-based focus group discussions around the country. Two such discussions were held at each of the six Regional Education Directorate levels. With an average of 75 participants in each of these 12 discussions, over 900 people were actively involved – including parents, teachers and local leaders. The discussions were held in the most commonly used local language of each area. Facilitators introduced the paragraph in the Policy dealing with the flexible

The Education Policy 2004–2015 states in paragraph 11.7, that:

## 11.7 Flexible School Calendar

11.7.1 Quality educational processes do not only require well-trained teachers able to use learner-centred teaching and learning methods and life skills approaches, but equally strategies that will enhance the attainment of sufficient hours of instructions and regular attendance of students. It is for this reason that the DoSE is committed to achieving a minimum of 880 quality hours of student-teacher contact time and at the same time creating the enabling environment for the enhancement of regular attendance of students.

11.7.2 In facilitating such attainment, the DoSE, in consultation with the regional education directorates, will introduce a flexible school calendar to be effectively and efficiently implemented at the decentralised level. The regional education directorates will be empowered to manage and implement their own school calendars but guided by well-thought out strategies for the attainment of regular attendance of students in school and the target number of instructional hours.

calendar and expounded on the rationale for the importance of achieving 880 contact hours. This was followed by a question and answer session during which clarifications were made.

In each meeting, people were then asked to break into groups of twelve. In each group it was important that at least one or two members could write. The instructions were for each group to come up with a school calendar of 880 instructional hours, with holidays and other religious days indicated. They were encouraged to consider seasonal patterns of livelihoods in the local area, daily routines of girls and boys, and any other factors they considered to be relevant.

At plenary, presentations were done by each of the six groups and the proposals were discussed and critiqued. There then ensued a process of synchronising the six calendars, taking similarities into consideration in order to produce two calendars. As there were two cluster consultations in each region this meant that there were four agreed sample calendars from each part of the country. The next step was for a core group representing parents and teachers to sit at

regional level and come up with two options out of the four, which would then be presented at a national debate for consensus building

During the national debate there were 10 representatives from each region. They presented the regional draft calendars to the other regional delegates who subjected the drafts to a debate followed by suggestions.

There were some key parameters agreed in order to help the discussions. For example, it was agreed that all calendars needed to start the school year on the same date and that all regions would have to publish the full timetable for the year on this first day. It was also agreed that the Ministry of Education would ensure that teachers would be posted to schools in line with the agreed regional timetables so that all classes would have a teacher. Furthermore it was agreed that parents associations and school management committees would ensure that villages were prepared in advance for the new timetables and would make houses available for teachers to rent. There would also be some scope for very local adaptability, for example to

accommodate market days: where markets took place during the school week concrete arrangements could be made by school management committees and parent teacher associations to replace the day with another. There may also be ad hoc variations in the calendar to accommodate the receiving of dignitaries or deaths of important persons in the village, etc.

The process was not easy. There were some irrational demands made by delegates. It was not easy to guarantee teacher supply and the movement/transportation of teachers to fit different calendars. There were complexities also around the movement of pupils and transfers between schools. It was a mistake not to involve the Planning Directorate of the Ministry as they play a key role in such matters. There were also failures in giving clear guidelines on matters such as statutory national holidays.

It has also be a little unclear how the process will be monitored and evaluated – and who will be held accountable if problems emerge.

But despite these problems this creation of flexible calendars in different regions has widely been seen as a great success. The decentralised school calendar is being implemented for the academic year September 2005 –July 2006. There are some significant changes, for example schools in the provinces closed earlier than those in the Greater Banjul so that children can assist with key agricultural work. There has also been an important breakthrough with the Ministry of Education, which has agreed to increase the allowances for teachers who are willing to be posted in remote areas. This was an unexpected gain from the process – but is precisely the sort of outcome that will emerge from a participatory process that brings grassroots voices from across the country into national level policy discussions.

## Reviewing the Commonwealth Education Fund

Earlier this year there was a comprehensive mid-term review of the Commonwealth Education Fund. The key insights from this review are shared here, along with the future directions.

### Background

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was set up by the British Chancellor Gordon Brown in February 2001. The CEF was framed around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education and gender – achieving gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2005 and universal completion of primary education by 2015. ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children UK came together to manage the fund. The focus of CEF was agreed to be on civil society input into the Education for All (EFA) process – to raise the profile of international education goals at a national level in 16 low-income Commonwealth countries. The CEF would increase public debate around education goals, promote greater transparency around education budgets and focus attention on the needs of children currently outside the education system.

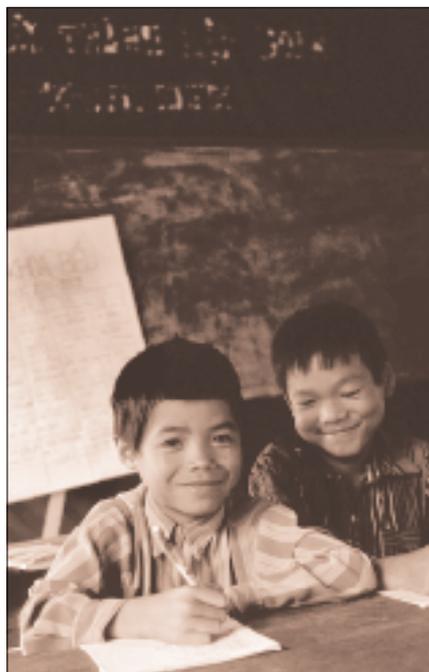
This mid-term review shows that, three years on, *CEF is making a difference* to how education civil society organisations (CSOs) are

engaging with the policy processes in low-income Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia. It is not always easy to measure the distinct contribution that CEF has made, especially when so much of the work is done through supporting coalitions. Indeed, CEF often deliberately takes a step back, playing a facilitating role and not seeking to take credit itself. This creates some challenges for a Review of CEF where showing clear attribution is desirable. Hopefully the combination of statistics, critical analysis and case studies in the full Review helps the reader gain a clear view of the roles that CEF has played and the contributions that it has made.

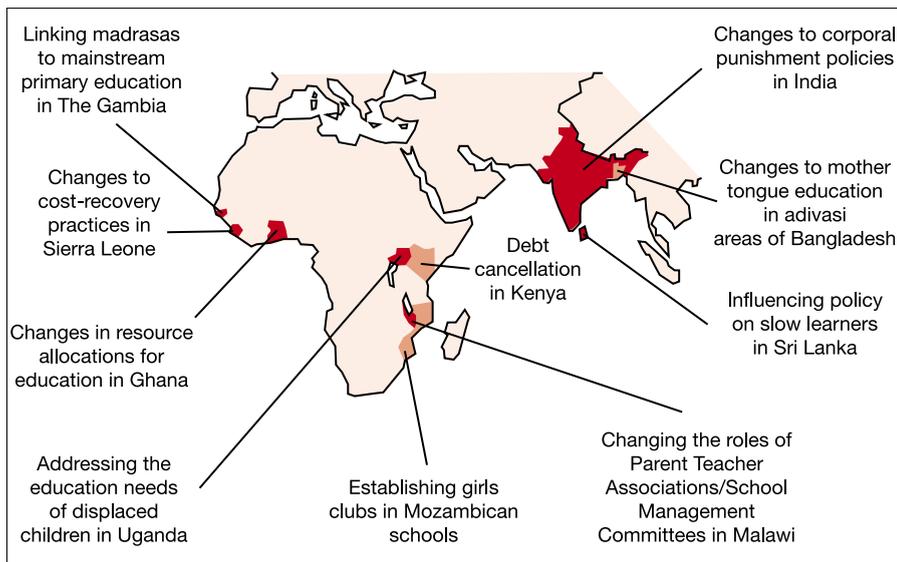
To see the full report go to [www.comonwealtheducationfund.org](http://www.comonwealtheducationfund.org)

### Some of the findings

Through the support of CEF *umbrella coalitions are emerging or being strengthened*. They are working to ensure that free quality basic education is a right for all children and they are building domestic pressure on their governments to get education higher up the political agenda. The Review recorded 97 examples of changes to education policy and practice in which CEF support has played a significant part. More generally, the education and gender MDGs previously had little visibility – but CEF has helped to ensure that governments feel increasingly accountable to deliver on them. In most countries effective links have been made between NGOs, teachers' unions, parent associations, faith-based organisations and social movements to build a common platform. The coalitions are growing in confidence but most are still in their adolescence – showing great potential but not yet fully-grown.



Michael Amendolai/Network/ActionAid



**Examples of Changes in Policy and Practice**

**The education and gender Millennium Development Goals previously had little visibility – but CEF has helped to ensure that governments feel increasingly accountable to deliver on them. In most countries effective links have been made between NGOs, teachers unions, parent associations, faith-based organisations and social movements to build a common platform.**

Citizen’s organisations are becoming empowered to participate effectively in the monitoring of *education finances and budgets*, leading to demands for increased public resourcing of the education sector. In most countries CEF has helped to demystify national budgets on education, and trained people at national and local levels to track education spending. This work is still in its infancy in some countries as there was a big capacity gap to overcome – but in others significant impacts have already been seen. Budget monitoring is now widely recognised to be crucially important; both in terms of ensuring that resource allocation

matches policy and determining that those resources are not misused. CEF’s work, among others, is demonstrating that this is an area where civil society engagement can make a massive difference.

CEF has started to identify and disseminate *innovative approaches* that have helped excluded children access and succeed in school. Impressive work is being done in different countries on inclusive education for disabled children, adapting learning for street children, challenging girls’ exclusion or putting education for displaced children on the agenda. These have been documented and shared in different ways within countries. To date the sharing of this work between countries has been very limited but the first steps towards this are now being taken.

CEF has forged a strong working relationship on education between ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children across low-income commonwealth countries in Africa and South Asia. CEF represents a *new way of working* – a new mode of international NGOs, working constructively and collaboratively with governments, civil society and the private sector in the North and South. Our concern now is that this work should be *sustained and expanded*.

Working with the *corporate sector* is an area where progress has been slow. The early focus was on fundraising and there were some

significant successes. However, the focus on fundraising has sometimes prevented meaningful relationships being built to encourage the private sector to add its voice behind the call for public education. This work is now shifting from its previous focus in the UK to focus instead on building in-country links and active engagement.

**The way forward**

The review argues there is a need to resource this work *beyond 2007*. Although some of the more established coalitions have been able to attract funding from other sources, most still depend substantially on CEF for core funding. Other donors are not yet ready to work with such a radical new mode of operation – but this is changing. The real returns to this investment are now becoming evident and are likely to accumulate further in the coming years. Success will attract other donors (as is evident in Bangladesh). However, it would be premature for CEF to terminate its support in 2007. Rather, we need to guarantee the continuity of this work for a further period so that it can move forward with confidence. The accumulating achievements from this mode of working in each country will be the key to attracting new donors and sustaining the work at a national level in each of the 16 countries.

Based on the review a proposal has been developed for extending CEF through to 2010, improving its effectiveness and expanding the countries that are reached by CEF. This proposal is presently being considered and has not yet been approved by the UK Treasury/DFID but in whatever scenario, this points towards the direction in which CEF is keen to move:

**Extending CEF:**

Over 70 countries will fail to achieve the first MDG target set for this year (that sought gender parity in primary and secondary education). This threatens to undermine the whole MDG framework unless concerted action is taken now.

2010 now becomes the date by

which all girls and boys must be in school if the education MDG is to be achieved: for all children to “complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015”. If they are to complete by 2015 they must be enrolled by 2010 at the very latest. The CEF Mid-term Review also clearly shows that 2010 is the date by which we are likely to have achieved real and sustained impact from the CEF in all 16 countries. There are clear patterns in the development of CEF work, particularly in respect of coalition development and building the confidence of other donors in this new mode of working.

### Strengthening/Improving CEF

The CEF Mid Term Review shows good work has been done under the three CEF ‘criteria’ but this has not always been connected into a coherent whole. There is a need for a stronger uniting vision for CEF work to take forward not only our aims for achieving the education and gender MDGs but our way of working through strong and focused civil society alliances and coalitions. We propose the following as a uniting vision and statement of purpose:

**CEF works strategically with civil society in countries likely to miss the education and gender MDGs, in order to make education a sustained domestic priority and to make public schools work effectively for all children**

### To achieve this, CEF will:

- Strengthen broad-based and democratically-run national education coalitions, that have active membership across the country and can effectively channel grassroots voices and experiences into influencing national level policy and practice.
- Ensure that financing for education is sufficient to make public schools work for all girls and boys, and that government budgets are effectively targeted and reach where they are most

needed.

- Support evidence-based influencing of policy rooted in innovative work that has succeeded in getting excluded children, particularly girls, into public schools.

Whilst impressive work has been done in each of the existing 16 CEF countries there has not been sufficient exchange between countries. In the coming period CEF will be more *pro-active* in supporting cross-country programmes of work that build capacity and generate learning, e.g. compiling practical resource materials on education budget tracking, capacity building on mainstreaming gender, innovative documentation on power dynamics in education coalitions.

It is clear however that the longer-term *sustainability of the work of CEF* depends on it becoming embedded at a national level in each country. It is hoped that in many countries CEF will evolve into a national Civil Society Education Fund (allowing for variations/diversity according to national contexts/laws) which strategically channels funding across civil society for education work.

### Expanding CEF

There are many countries outside the Commonwealth that face serious challenges in achieving the education and gender MDGs. There is also growing interest in the CEF mode of work from other countries, notably in francophone Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. In the coming period we propose to *expand the CEF mode of working to new countries* beyond the Commonwealth, seed-funding work based on the CEF approach so that we can truly contribute to achievement of the global goals.

**We await a response to this proposal from DFID/Treasury – but in any scenario CEF is committed to finding ways to implement this full vision.**

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## UN Millennium Summit delivers rhetoric without commitment

by Lucia Fry,  
Global Campaign for Education

### Background

Following the G8 Summit in July 2005, Global Campaign for Education campaigners turned their attention to the Millennium +5 World Summit in New York in September. This Summit was originally conceived as an opportunity for Heads of State to review progress in meeting the Millennium Declaration of 2000, strengthen the UN and commit countries to peace-building measures. The Summit became a major campaigning moment for anti-poverty activists, especially the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, demanding that governments of rich and poor countries deliver on past promises to end the scandal of global poverty. Following hard on the heels of the G8 Summit, hopes were originally high that it would be an opportunity for world leaders to spell out real action on aid, trade, debt and poverty reduction strategies.

Sadly, these aspirations were dashed as Summit negotiations descended into farce following a last-minute intervention by the US. Just three weeks before the Summit, John Bolton, controversial new appointee to the post of US Ambassador to the UN, asked for drastic changes to the Outcome Document. Negotiations that had been running smoothly for months were thrown into disarray. The proposal ate up valuable time and immediately put other countries on the defensive, making agreement on strong language toward firm commitments next to impossible. After a strong backlash, the U.S. backtracked on some of these proposed changes, but considerable damage was done to the original mission of the Summit.

### GCE Mobilisation

GCE members engaged in a number

of advocacy activities in the run-up to the Summit, including: lobbying delegations at country level; making submissions on the drafts of the outcome document; and sending letters and emails to missions. In an unprecedented collaboration, UNESCO signed a joint public statement to the media with GCE and the Global Movement for Children expressing grave concern about the missed 2005 target. But the most high profile mobilisation was around the ‘buddies’.

The GCE actions at the UN Summit were a culmination of a remarkable mobilisation that started in April 2005 in the Global Action Week, when over five million children around the world made cut-out card ‘friends’ and demanded ‘Send My Friend to School’. These cut-outs, made by children in over 110 countries represented the 100 million children out of school worldwide ( see <http://www.campaignforeducation.org> and [www.sendmyfriend.org](http://www.sendmyfriend.org)). These ‘friends’ or ‘buddies’ were presented to political leaders in the different countries where they were made and were also gathered in large numbers at the G8 Summit in Edinburgh to put pressure on leaders to “make poverty history”. Many buddies had already travelled across two or three continents before they made their way to New York.

On the eve of the Summit, 100,000 of these ‘friends’ were sent off on a journey round Manhattan with speeches by Rasheda Choudhury and Kumi Naidoo. The ‘friends’ were loaded onto a New York City School Bus, and were accompanied on their journey round 10 city landmarks by Kimani Ng’anga – an elderly Kenyan gentleman who has made history by enrolling at primary school at the age of 84. He was only finally able to enrol in school when the Kenyan government eliminated user fees in 2003.

At each point on the journey, including the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and the UN Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, Mr Kimani released 10 balloons – each one representing a million children out of school. In Central Park, members of the public and the media



Jess Hurd/ReportDigital/ActionAid

**‘Buddies’ representing some of the 100 million children out of school worldwide**

**The GCE actions at the UN Summit were a culmination of a remarkable mobilisation that started in April 2005 in the Global Action Week.**

were invited to play ‘Girls’ Education – Snakes and Ladders’, a giant board game that illustrates factors helping and hindering girls to go school.

The journey ended at the Plaza, where Mr Kimani was joined by Kailash Satyarthi, President of GCE, and Suman, Rebecca and David, three liberated child labourers who had earlier given powerful testimony

of the links between education and elimination of child labour at a speaker meeting organized by Global March on Child Labour. Together with US GCE campaigners, they presented Nane Annan, wife of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, with ‘friends’ from around the world.

An incredible amount of media interest was generated, with reports on CNN, the BBC, SABC, Reuters and AP as well as dozens of news outlets across Africa and Asia. The story was picked up by almost every newspaper in the US and indeed in many papers was probably the most widely publicised story about the whole UN Summit. ActionAid International, the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, Global March on Child Labour, and the UN Millennium Campaign supported the event.

**The messages**

Behind the popular mobilisation were some very serious messages. GCE’s lobbying and campaigning during the Summit called for:

- Acknowledgement of the failure to achieve the 2005 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education, and implementation of an urgent action plan to get the world back on track to achieve gender equality in education.
- Expansion of the Fast Track Initiative (the main global mechanism for mobilising increased aid to education), and translating the endorsement contained in the G8 communique into firm financial commitments.
- Commitment by Southern governments to implement specific policy changes that are a precondition to achieving Education For All.

A briefing paper prepared by GCE setting out in full our positions for the Summit can be found at [www.sendmyfriend.org/docs/NYeducatetoendpovertypaper.pdf](http://www.sendmyfriend.org/docs/NYeducatetoendpovertypaper.pdf)

**The outcome**

Five years ago, the UN Millennium

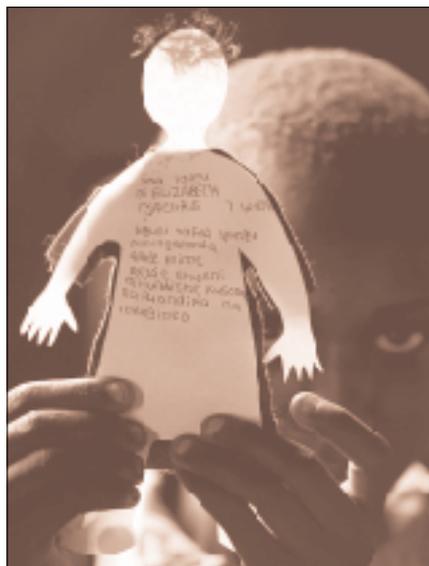
Summit set just one goal for achievement in 2005: gender parity in primary and secondary education. All the other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were framed for achievement in 2015 but girls' education was seen as such an important catalyst for change that it was prioritized for urgent action. It is shocking that the outcome document of the UN Summit in New York does not even acknowledge the fact that over 90 countries have failed to meet this first target. This is not only a tragedy for those left behind, but a signal of the poor health of the MDG project in general. As Rasheda Choudhury put it at the launch of the GCE event in New York... *"If world leaders won't even wake up to the failure to meet this target, what hope is there for all the other MDGs?"*

Lobbying and campaigning yielded some benefits, however. Early drafts of the outcome document made no reference at all to education. Following sustained pressure the final version at least includes a couple of paragraphs, reaffirming the Dakar Framework for Action and the importance of Education For All. There is an explicit commitment to *"free and compulsory primary education of good quality"* – despite attempts by the US to remove references to "free" education. There is also a commitment to mobilise *"enhanced resources of all types through the Education For All Fast Track Initiative"*.

In the section on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women there is a pledge to *"eliminate gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by the earliest possible date and at all educational levels by 2015"*. While weak, this was an improvement on earlier drafts, which did not even refer to gender inequality in education. This is reinforced by the section on "quick impact initiatives" which commits countries to take action for the *"expansion of local school meal programmes using home-grown foods where possible and the elimination of user fees for primary education"*. Hopefully the large number of countries that charge children to go to school will heed this important commitment, as it will

have a particularly beneficial effect on girls' ability to start and stay at school.

However, even these modest steps forward are seriously undermined by the failure to move forward on aid, debt and trade at the Summit. Without serious commitment by rich countries to change the nature of their relationship with poorer nations, there is a shaky future for the MDG project. Of particular concern is the fact that conditionalities and macro-economic policies imposed on poor countries undermine investment in education. The seriousness of these issues for education are addressed in ActionAid's new report, *'Contradicting Commitments: How the IMF undermines achievement of EFA'*, which has been endorsed by GCE (see page 14 for an article on this report).



### Next steps

So, after a year of hard campaigning, a mixed picture has emerged. While the milestone events of 2005 have not lived up to our expectations, they have nevertheless coaxed some concessions out of rich countries. And although we remain far away from realising the whole Education For All package, the importance of education, and especially girls' education, has been recognised as never before. Indeed, at the recent World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings, President Paul Wolfowitz said, *"One of the encouraging signs I saw on my trip to South Asia is the premium Pakistan and India are now placing*

*on girls' education... Through the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, the Bank plans to join other donors to double the enrolment of girls in 60 countries over the next five years. We have a plan. Now we need the resources. We will need to raise at least \$2.5 billion per year to fulfil the dreams of thousands of school children eager for a brighter future."* There are growing signs that donors such as the UK, France and Canada are considering dramatic increases in aid to education.

It's therefore crucial that GCE lobbying and campaigning keeps education prominent in the minds of the policy-makers. We must ensure that warm words become real cash commitments. We must ensure that new aid does not dissipate or divert to politically expedient destinations. And we must galvanise leaders in the South to plan ambitiously, to invest appropriately, and to demand that rich countries keep their promises that 'no country with a viable plan for achieving EFA will be thwarted for lack of resources.'

### Our demands: Rich countries must:

- Increase overseas development assistance to 0.7% of GNI, ensure full cancellation of the unpayable debts of all low-income countries and deliver trade justice.
- Increase aid to basic education in low-income countries from the current level of about \$1.7bn per year to at least \$3bn in 2006, \$5bn in 2007 and \$7bn in 2008. Countries that qualify to join the FTI should receive priority for these funds.
- Expand the FTI to include a total of 51 poor countries by the end of 2006, utilising and building on the additional aid commitments agreed at the G8 Summit to provide significant external financing for education.
- In order to extend universal access to lower secondary level and meet the needs of hundreds of millions of illiterate youth and adults, continue to increase allocations to basic education in order to reach at least \$10bn

a year by 2010, or about 20% of the total \$48 billion promised increase. This is in line with the Africa Commission recommendations, and fully justifiable in terms of the direct and dramatic contribution that education makes to health, productivity, democratic consolidation and women's empowerment.

- Improve the responsiveness of international aid mechanisms, including the EFA-FTI, to encourage the development of gendered Education For All strategies with specific interventions to increase gender equality in schools.
- Take immediate measures to eradicate the worst forms of child labour, as promised in ILO convention 182 in 1999.
- Ensure that IMF policies do not in any way discourage poor nations from aggressively seeking universal basic education or fairly compensating teachers.

#### **Poor countries must:**

- Increase government spending on basic education to at least 3% of GDP by 2006.
- Abolish fees and charges for primary education in 2006, making education free and compulsory for at least six years.
- Establish time-bound plans to expand free and compulsory education to at least nine years.
- Introduce comprehensive national programmes to provide extra support to girls and the poorest children by 2007.
- Ensure by 2008 that every girl has access to a safe and welcoming place to learn, and is taught in an appropriately gender-sensitive way, so as to promote and improve women's participation in all aspects of national life.
- Ensure 100% net enrolment in Year 1 intakes by 2009 at the latest.
- Promote an open national debate about the trade offs between greater investments in education and adherence to the fiscal prescriptions promoted by the IMF.

## **Teachers Needed! Global Week Of Action 2006**

*by Lucy Tweedie, GCE*

The Global Campaign for Education Global Action Week 2006 is scheduled for the week of 24th–30th April and has the central focus on “Every Child Needs a Teacher”. This will build on the huge success of previous action weeks. In 2003 – over 2 million people in 70 countries took part in the world record-breaking *Girl's Education: the Biggest Lesson*. In 2004 – 2.5 million people took part in the *World's Biggest Lobby*. In 2005 a staggering 5 million people demanded world leaders to “Educate to End Poverty” by sending them paper cut out figures of children and requests to “Send My Friend to School”.

**There are insufficient numbers of quality teachers in the education systems globally for children to receive a quality education. Unless there are enough motivated and well-trained teachers the world will not reach the EFA goals, hence the central message of the action week will be “Teachers Needed”.**

In previous GCE action weeks, the focus of the campaign action has been on access to education. For the 2006 action, it is deemed timely to build the focus on the aspects of education relating to quality as well as access. One key determinant of this is the fact that there are insufficient numbers of teachers in the education systems globally for children to receive a good education. Unless there are enough motivated and well-trained teachers the world will not reach the EFA goals, hence the central message of the action week will be “Teachers Needed”. We will demand that politicians and officials keep pledges made to ensure that every child is not only able to go to school, but is also taught by a well-qualified teacher in a class of no more than 40 pupils.

#### **Why the Focus on Teachers?**

- Without quality teachers there will be no EFA – teachers play the pivotal role in education reforms and systems.
- Teacher salaries make up the biggest part of national expenditure on education and are therefore critical within the EFA financing gap.
- Teachers are under pressure – rising enrolments, pressure from HIV/AIDS, low salaries and poor living conditions. Poor conditions have an especially negative impact on female teachers.
- Well-trained teachers are the critical factor in providing access and quality in education, yet education policy makers rarely listen to their voices.
- Receiving quality education is highly dependent on sufficient numbers of teachers. UNESCO estimates that a minimum of 15 million additional teachers will be needed to achieve Universal Primary Education.
- Many countries have resorted to hiring ill-trained and badly paid teachers (often called para-teachers) as a cost saving strategy. However this has resulted in declining quality, especially in rural or disadvantaged areas, where such schemes tend to be trialled, further exacerbating educational inequalities.
- Including girls, and children belonging to ethnic and other minorities requires education that is relevant and free of discrimination. Teachers need training to sensitise them to

learners' diverse needs, and teacher recruitment needs to ensure women and teachers from ethnic and other minorities are adequately represented.

- Good teachers, especially female teachers, are particularly important for helping girls stay in school.
- Issues around supply, quality and valuing teachers apply to varying degrees in rich and poor countries.
- Teachers are increasingly in the spotlight; this year is the 40th Anniversary of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers; recent reports such as the World Bank World Development Report and the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report give high profile to teacher issues.

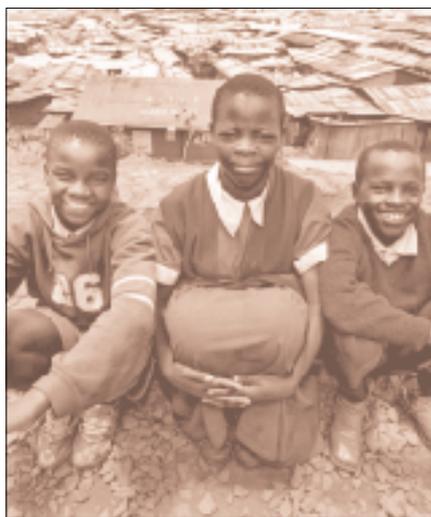
As we mobilise to communicate the message "Teachers Needed" we may highlight:

- Achieving EFA depends on having enough teachers (a ratio of no more than 1:40).
- Teachers need to be professionally trained, adequately paid and well-motivated for this to happen.
- In order to achieve this, there must be sufficient financing for the expansion of education systems.

Although the theme of the week refers to teachers, the focus of activities will still be on children and their right to be taught by well-qualified, skilled professionals. There are three stages proposed for the actions before and during the week:

### Stage 1:

Children and adult learners create a dossier on the subject of teachers and quality EFA, to be entitled 'The Case for Teachers'. Where appropriate, this project can focus on issues in the vicinity of their own school, adult learning facility, community, district or region. Alternatively, they can explore issues in another country or globally.



Sven Torfning/Paros Pictures/ActionAid

### Stage 2:

The dossiers will be discussed on 'Officials Back To School Day' during Global Action Week in order to highlight the reality of the situation facing learners and teachers. Officials, political figures or celebrities should be invited to schools and adult learning facilities to meet with campaigners who have been collecting evidence for the dossier and respond to their concerns.

### Stage 3:

The Big Hearing: Coalitions will put on national-level public events designed to draw maximum attention to the issues identified and raised during the week. These events should be in the style of a 'hearing' or 'enquiry' in which dossiers from across the country are brought together to use as evidence to present a case in support of teachers.

GCE has a truly unique value in its ability to mobilise trade unions, NGOs and CSOs to work together in unison. More than ever before, with the topic of teachers, it is important that the unions and other groups work together.

For further information about any aspect of the week please contact Lucy Tweedie, the GCE Action Week coordinator at: [actionweek@campaignforeducation.org](mailto:actionweek@campaignforeducation.org) or visit the website [www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)

## Fee or free? The burden of debt bondage on education

by Katarina Tomasevski<sup>1</sup>

Katarina Tomasevski has recently completed a remarkable publication called '*Fee or Free? Right to Education Global Report 2005*', which is the most systematic documentation ever of countries where children have to pay to go to school. In this short article she introduces the report which looks at the types of costs charged and maps these against constitutional and legal commitments to free education.

The 2005 World Summit came back to the global consensus reached in 1921, that primary education should be free. It took 15 years to forge that fragile consensus, to get governments and international organizations to affirm that primary education should be free. From 1990 to 2005, the international community was split in two and the vocabulary of the part that holds the cheque book studiously avoided mentioning that the law mandates free primary education. That exacerbated the damage done to public education during the infamous lost decades of structural adjustment.

How big is the damage? *Free or Fee? Right to Education Global Report 2005* shows that primary school is not free in 92 out of 192 countries in the world and no less than 22 different types of charges are levied.

Charges are most widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Only three countries in Africa guarantee free education for all children. A variety of charges is levied in the rest, even where the law mandates that primary education should be free. No less than 15 African governments are battling to abolish charges. Their efforts are poorly known and weakly supported.

One adult in northern Europe has to pay for the education of three

<sup>1</sup> The author was the Special Rapporteur on the Right to education of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1998–2004.

children with a GDP per capita of \$25,000, while one African adult has to educate six children with a GDP per capita of \$500. Nonetheless, where increased public funding for education collides with a requirement to lower the fiscal deficit, children pay the price. In at least three countries, school children have to work, at school. Worse, for the poorest and most indebted countries, making education free is not even on the agenda. No review of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers has been done by the World Bank so as to translate its rhetorical commitment to free education into policy as this Report has done. Why? Because debt relief was not meant to free education from its bondage and it was convenient not to show how un-free it was and still is.

The first policy of the new government in Burundi, in August 2005, was the abolition of school fees in primary education. The change from violating human rights to investing in them was inaugurated by the new government of Malawi in 1994. It abolished the charges which the previous regime, notorious for its human rights violations, had introduced following the World Bank's advice. The new civilian government in Nigeria did likewise as soon as the transition from military to civilian government had been accomplished.

A government which responds to popular demand prioritizes education, a dictatorship depletes education of funding. Comparisons between military expenditure and investment in education tell the same story world-wide, as this Report shows. There are at least 150 soldiers for every 100 teachers in the world. And yet, we are supposed to believe that there is no money to free education from debt bondage.

The fastest transition from free to for-fee education, in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, demonstrates the worst features of the switch from the previous, centrally-planned and funded free education to the new, free-market model which the World Bank likes so much. In Ukraine, teachers'

salaries are below the officially designated poverty line while in Tajikistan they amount to a monthly \$5, way below the dollar per day necessary for survival. In Moldova, annual payments required in public primary school and the cost of textbooks equal three average monthly salaries.

This Report argues that primary education should be freed from financial obstacles so that all children can go to school. This is mandated by international human rights law and, now, endorsed by the 2005 World Summit Outcome. What needs to happen? The rhetoric has to be translated into action. Education is a human right and this means that its violations should be exposed and opposed. Isn't it time to expose debt relief which hinders making education free as a violation of the right to education?

The key findings of the *Free or Fee? Right to Education Global Report 2005*

### Exploring the legal strength of the right to education

Katarina Tomasevski will be helping ActionAid in the coming months to define the parameters within which we can explore if the right to education is justiciable. Who can citizens hold accountable for the violation of their rights? As a first step an intern, Ben Spier will be doing background research on the following areas:

- Identifying countries which have a clear constitutional commitment to the right to education.
- Analysing in detail the nature and scope of the rights and the possible range of government obligation.
- Exploring how the denial of this right can lead to legislative action.
- Developing a typology of rights denial and entry point for legal action (do international conventions provide an entry point? How about Constitutions? What else could?).
- Researching countries where there are particular opportunities for legal action on the right to education.
- Reviewing the state of litigation in economic and social rights such as right to food, land and housing rights.
- Identifying public interest litigation groups that focus on economic and social rights.
- Investigating avenues for taking legal action against international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, donor agencies (or countries governing these agencies).
- Exploring the possibility of working with certain groups (e.g. pastoralists/displaced people) that are discriminated against within the recognized right to education.
- Looking at the potential to link this with budget-tracking work (e.g. to monitor where HIPC relief money, which is supposed to be focused/tied to greater investment on education, health and other social sector, is actually being spent).

are available as of 30th September 2005 at [www.right-to-education.org](http://www.right-to-education.org)

It is important to ensure that any legal action we do support has the potential to make a real difference. It has to have the potential to go beyond achieving a symbolic victory that recognizes the right to education, but offers no real change in access or quality of education. We need to determine what would make the most tangible difference to people's lives. It is likely that legal action would need to be backed up by popular mobilisation and close work with the media to ensure positive outcomes. It could however be an important addition to the tactics and strategies pursued by activists campaigning for the right to education.

If you are interested in this work or can help, contact Ben Spier or Akanksha Marphatia:  
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# How the IMF jeopardizes the right to free education

by Akanksha Marphatia

Education is a fundamental human right, not a privilege. It should be available to all children free of charge and should be of high quality. Many countries have recognized this basic human right in their constitutions. Yet 100 million children have never been to school, two-thirds of them girls. If the international goals on education (set in Dakar and reaffirmed as Millennium Development Goals) are to be achieved by 2015 then investment in education will have to rise. New teachers will need to be recruited and new classrooms built. But for many countries it is almost impossible to increase spending on education because of the tight economic policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The contradictions between IMF policies and agreed international development goals are documented in our new report *Contradicting Commitments: How the achievement of EFA is being undermined by the IMF*.

**New teachers will need to be recruited and new classrooms built. But for many countries it is almost impossible to increase spending on education because of the tight economic policies imposed by the IMF.**

**What compels countries to make the choice between investing in education and adhering to IMF policies?**

*“Our country is heavily dependent on foreign resources and it cannot risk its relationship with the IMF on whose ratings it depends for access to soft loans.”* – National Bank of Ethiopia

**What are some of the consequences of these policies?**

*“Intervention of the IMF, in search of macroeconomic stability, has become an obstacle for educational development and the right to education through conditionalities that oblige the country to limit and even reduce public spending.”* – Ministry of Finance, Guatemala

**Where does this leave national governments?**

*“We are caught between a rock and a hard place in terms of managing IMF requirements and then dealing with the demands of our electorate.”* Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa

## IMF held to account with release of new reports

Since 2004, ActionAid’s International Education Team has been undertaking research on the impact of IMF policies on education financing and achievement. The final report, *Contradicting Commitments: how the achievement of education for all is being undermined by the International Monetary Fund*, was published in September 2005 in partnership with the Global Campaign for Education (GCE)<sup>1</sup>. It was made possible in large part due to the efforts of country education staff and partners in Guatemala, Bangladesh, India, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

The final report was launched on September 16th alongside the companion report by ActionAid International USA, *Changing*

*Course: alternative approaches to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and fight HIV/AIDS*<sup>2</sup>. This report questions the role of the IMF as the leading authority over macroeconomic discourse, especially since many of its policies have not led to social or economic development. IMF-led development has in fact failed the poor. The report looks at how these policies are both debated and contested among economists worldwide, signaling that in order for change to happen, countries must explore alternative policies.

These policies could provide countries with the space to spend more on education, HIV/AIDS and health.

The launch of the two reports was timed with the last day of the UN Millennium Summit to remind policy makers and advocates that unless there are changes to the

monetary and fiscal policies of the IMF, countries will not be able to increase spending to levels necessary to meet the MDGs by 2015.<sup>3</sup> Although the target date is 10 years away, the goals demand immediate action if they are to be met. Achieving universal primary education and gender parity requires major scaling up of resources now in order to ensure access and success through the entire primary school cycle and entry into secondary education.

A follow-on conference in Washington DC tackled exactly how this scaling up can happen. The day-long meeting brought together education, HIV/AIDS and health advocates with progressive economists.<sup>4</sup> Participants discussed alternative economic policies and advocacy strategies for holding the IMF and governments accountable for low expenditure on social sectors. The panel included speakers from eight different organizations around the world who have undertaken similar case studies illustrating the devastating impact of IMF policies.<sup>5</sup> This meeting was a first step to a longer-term process of bringing advocates and economists to the same table to discuss viable strategies for increasing spending on education while ensuring macroeconomic stability. On the morning of the meeting, the IMF made an angry response to a letter in the Washington Post by David Archer (see box), showing their vulnerability and sensitivity on these issues.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.actionaidusa.org/pdf/ContradictingCommit8663C.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.actionaidusa.org/pdf/Changing\\_Course\\_Report.pdf](http://www.actionaidusa.org/pdf/Changing_Course_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women/events/anotherway\\_20050907](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women/events/anotherway_20050907)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.actionaidusa.org/pdf/IFIconferenceInvite2.pdf>

September 21st 2005  
Washington Post: letter to the editor from David Archer

### The IMF's barriers to education

The Sept. 16 KidsPost notice about Kimani Nganga going to elementary school at 85, after the Kenyan government finally made education free for all its citizens, was inspiring. Unfortunately, children in 92 countries still must pay to go to school, and most may not be able to afford school until they reach a similarly octogenarian age.

In most of these countries, governments pass on costs to parents because they cannot increase their own spending on education. The strict conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund often are the biggest constraint. To keep the IMF happy, for example, nations are often forced to keep their inflation levels almost impossibly low, even if this means leaving children without a school or teacher.

Five years ago, at the U.N. Millennium Summit, 100 million children were promised an education by 2015. The contradictions between the international development goals and IMF conditions should be addressed now.

*“The general feeling among the citizenry is that government decisions are subordinate to the IMF rules and directives and that the country is held captive by these decisions without much recourse.” – Ministry of Education, Kenya.*

### Denying democracy?

There are many other policies imposed by the IMF that contribute to the constraints on education budgets such as enforced trade liberalisation (which undermine core government revenue from import tariffs) and strict limits to deficits (which prevent poor countries from adjusting spending levels across an economic cycle as is often done in wealthy countries). In this context, can we be surprised that so many countries are forced to charge children to go to primary school? As Katarina Tomasevski has documented (see separate article), 92 countries charge children for the right to go to school and this excludes large numbers of children. The control that the IMF, one organization, retains over the monetary and fiscal policies of other countries is astonishing. If countries do not abide by their policies, then all aid can and has been cut off. This raises major issues around North-South power relations.

- Policies are not decided by national goals. Education may be recognized as a fundamental right in the constitution, but this priority is not reflected in budget allocations because of the constraints imposed by IMF policies.
- As a result, policy space is severely limited, throwing into question a country's right to democratic governance and control over their own economy. Parliaments are often not consulted on the agreements made between the IMF and the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance.
- All this contributes to eroding the role of the state in providing education. This is further supported by both World Bank

### Consequences of IMF policies: missing teachers

The research that fed into *Contradicting Commitments* came from eight countries. In all eight countries the research showed that IMF policies both directly and indirectly impact the number of teachers a country can hire, their contract terms and salaries. The golden rule for the IMF is that inflation must be kept low (preferably under 5%) even though this is not a justifiable position if one reviews economics literature. The impact of this is that countries cannot increase spending on education at the rate needed to make a real difference, because to do so would be inflationary.

There are strict limits put on public spending in order to control inflation and this leads to a cap on public sector wage bills. As teachers and health workers are the largest group of public sector workers, their jobs or salaries are the first to be cut.

The report shows the consequences of this. Under pressure from the IMF, countries needing to make savings on teacher salaries choose one of four options:

- Limiting teacher numbers. Kenya needs 60,000 new teachers to deal with rising enrolments but teacher numbers are frozen at 1998 levels. Nepal is not allowed to employ any more teachers

until 2009 even though enrolment campaigns have recently meant 200,000 more children are in school.

- Freezing teacher wages – often driving wages below the level at which teachers can make a living and thus contributing to the brain drain from countries like Ghana, Ethiopia and Bangladesh to Europe or the US. Sierra Leone has agreed to decrease its wage bill from 8.4% of GDP to 5.8% of GDP by 2008.
- Employing only ‘contract teachers’ on short term contracts – whether the two year contract (with no benefits and lower pay) now routinely offered to teachers in Nigeria or 10 month contracts offered in some other contexts.
- Employing non-professional teachers, paying people with little or no qualification a third of a proper teacher's salary – such as in India where at least 220,000 non-professionals have now been introduced leading to major concerns about quality. The status of teachers is undermined and the bargaining power of teachers unions is destroyed as non-professionals are not allowed to unionise.

<sup>5</sup> Education Reform and Education Councils, Guatemala; Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), Belgium; Physicians for Human Rights, USA; Global AIDS Alliance, USA; ChristianAid, UK; Save the Children, UK; WEMOS, Netherlands and ISODEC, Ghana.

and IMF policies and conditionalities promoting privatization.

Poor countries are under ever more international pressure to reduce poverty, especially to invest in actions to address the Millennium Development Goals. Yet the same international community is directly responsible for blocking this investment. There are even suggestions that if large amounts of new aid are mobilized for education (as promised by the G8), many countries will not be allowed to accept it as to do so would increase inflationary pressures. These absurd contradictions need to be exposed and they need to be urgently resolved.

## WAYS FORWARD

### Actions in Africa, Asia and Latin America

- Promoting a domestic public debate at the time of the periodic Article IV consultations when Ministries of Finance and Central Bank officials negotiate macroeconomic policies with the visiting mission from the IMF.
- Demanding that governments are open about the trade-offs and sacrifices they have made when agreeing low-inflation/low-spending approaches with the IMF.
- Encouraging a dialogue between Ministries of Education, Health and those addressing HIV/AIDS (the areas most affected by ceilings placed on national budgets), regarding alternatives, especially around the time that budgets are formulated or presented.
- Supporting capacity building of southern parliamentarians ability to scrutinise IFI loan agreements including conditions.<sup>6</sup>
- Pressuring the Ministries of Finance to take responsibility for their budget cutting actions. Helping to expose the contradictions between present fiscal policies of the Ministry of Finance and achievement of the MDGs.

**Poor countries are under ever more international pressure to reduce poverty, especially to invest in actions to address the Millennium Development Goals. Yet the same international community is directly responsible for blocking this investment.**

- Urging the acceptance of new aid for education and contesting any suggestion that this will impact on deficit or lead to excessive inflation.
- Building the capacity of civil society groups and the media to understand these 'big picture' questions around the financing of education with greatly scaled-up economic literacy training on top of the budget tracking work that has become increasingly popular in recent years.<sup>7</sup>
- Making the case that education is the soundest investment for long-term economic growth – something which is widely agreed and then all too widely ignored.

### Actions in G8 countries/ the North

- Urging your country's representatives to the IFI boards to demand a revision to the IMF's definition of macroeconomic stability – accepting that the current framework prevents proper investments in education (and health and HIV/AIDS).
- Questioning the impact of subordinating long-term fiscal policy tools to short-term monetary policy goals, and encouraging the move to 'real economic targeting' based on employment levels, growth and human development indicators, rather than only basing monetary policy goals on very low inflation.
- Questioning the impact on sovereignty, democracy and good governance produced by the IMF's inordinate degree of influence over the economic policies of borrowers.
- Encouraging other rich countries to follow the lead of the recent UK Treasury/DFID paper that openly questioned the efficacy of all other rich country donors deferring to the IMF signal.
- Demanding complete cancellation of debt for the poorest countries and encouraging debt swaps for education and other social sector spending.
- Ceasing trade liberalisation conditionalities in aid.
- Supporting the need for *comprehensive* Poverty and Social Impact Assessments on macroeconomic policy recommendations, which include assessments of multiple policy options and scenarios.

Special thanks to the following AAI education staff and partners who made this report possible:

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- Ethiopia – Elias Bernhau & Daniel Bekele
- Kenya – Wambua Nzioka (Elimu Yetu)
- Nigeria – Balaraba Aliyu & Chinwube Egbe
- Sierra Leone – Samuel Bangura & Tennyson Williams.

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<sup>6</sup> See 'Parliamentarians' Petition [www.ippinfo.org](http://www.ippinfo.org)  
<sup>7</sup> Such work has already begun in Bangladesh with the publication of several articles on the IMF on the front page of the New Age Daily Newspaper (<http://www.newagebd.com/2005/apr/30/front.html#1>).

## GATS and Education: Enforcing privatisation? Should we be scared?

Is the World Trade Organisation in the process of enforcing the privatisation of basic education? ActionAid has commissioned a study by *Almira Zejnilagic* to find out more about the trade in education services and where discussions are going at the WTO, particularly looking at the infamous General Agreement on Trade in Services. Here we outline some of the core insights and outcomes that the International Education Team of ActionAid has drawn from this study.



Liba Taylor/ActionAid

### What is GATS?

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is mainly concerned with trade in goods and products. In 1995, however, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) put services on the table and within the remit of the WTO. 'Services' includes anything from banking to rubbish collection, transport and water delivery. Education and health also come into the fold. Trade in services is growing rapidly and now comprises around 25% of global trade.

Liberalisation is the main goal of GATS. The agreement aims to progressively remove any restrictions that can be considered as 'barriers to trade' in services, thereby creating conditions for multinational corporations to gain greater access to foreign markets. It sets the parameters around how governments can and cannot intervene in markets.

Governments can choose not to include a service sector for 'specific commitments' if they wish, although other WTO members apply pressure in bilateral negotiations or can formally ask or 'request' that sectors are liberalised under a 'request-and-offer' process at the WTO.

When a government signs up its education sector to the GATS it is agreeing to abide by the rules of 'market access' and 'national treatment.' This includes forgoing the right to both limit and choose between local and foreign companies in the provision of educational services. It also takes away the right of governments to use regulations to ensure foreign companies benefit those unable to access education, poor communities and local economics.

### Should education be included in GATS?

GATS gives the following definition of services:

*'Services' includes any service in any sector except services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority. "A service supplied in the exercise of governmental authority" means any service which is supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers*

This would seem to exclude basic education from GATS as surely it is 'a service supplied in the exercise of governmental authority' which is not supplied on a 'commercial basis', and which is not 'in competition with one or more service suppliers'. However, many people are worried that poor definitions of these terms makes the text of the Agreement quite vague and that interpretation of the text may not always be conducted fairly.

One particular worry relates to the fact that in many countries, public and state funded educational systems are in practice mixed systems, as students are often obliged to pay some sort of expenses and fees, particularly in secondary and tertiary education (but also in primary education as recorded by Katarina Tomasevski). As such this could be seen as a commercial operation. The existence of private fee-paying schools could also be used to argue that there is competition with different service providers. In theory foreign and domestic for-profit providers could

therefore demand the right to compete. In this context, government costs per capita spent on children in the public education system could be seen as 'subsidies' to government schools and thus as barriers to trade.

In reaction to this governments could take one of two paths. They could abolish all fees and challenge the existence of private schools – ensuring that there is just one single coherent public education system which is provided by the State as part of its "exercising of governmental authority". This would clearly be our desired option, our preferred option. But the nightmare alternative cannot be ignored: that governments would be compelled to give out subsidies equally to all providers (whether domestic or foreign) – spending public money to prop up privatised schools. Sadly this is not far from what we see happening at present in the USA.

### The trouble with GATS

The concern with GATS is that it includes specific rules on liberalisation that apply once a country decides to nominate a service sector under the GATS remits. Once a government has "scheduled a commitment" to open up basic education, this offer cannot be withdrawn or reversed. It becomes legally enforceable by the WTO dispute settlement procedures. Once governments have taken the step in this direction it will be almost impossible (and prohibitively expensive) to reverse.

The GATS agreement defines

<sup>1</sup> See ActionAid's October 14th 2005 brief on 'WTO GATS report on water privatisation in South Africa' for more information on GATS. Alex.wijeratna@actionaid.org

four modes of trade in services where countries can make offers or requests:

- “(a) from the territory of one Member into the territory of any other Member; [In education terms this might involve, for example, cross-border supply or ‘programme mobility’]
- (b) in the territory of one Member to the service consumer of any other Member; [This relates in education terms to “consumption abroad” or ‘student mobility’]
- (c) by a service supplier of one Member, through commercial presence in the territory of any other Member; [In education this means “commercial presence” or ‘provider mobility’ and may represent a particular concern]
- (d) by a service supplier of one Member, through presence of natural persons of a Member in the territory of any other Member.” [In education this refers to things like ‘temporary mobility of academics’.]

Each time that a country “schedules a commitment” it offers up some part of its education system (e.g. primary, secondary, higher or adult education) under one or more of the above four modes.

Fortunately, to date education is the service sector with the least scheduled commitments and much of what has been affected by GATS relates to the margins of provision (e.g. in respect of adult education it is courses for driving licences that have been affected not basic literacy). Not much was done in term of requests and offers in basic education in the last round, and not much is expected to be done in this present round (which concludes at the end of 2005). But some countries have made offers to open up their basic education system. Of the 42 members who scheduled commitments in the field of education so far, 30 of these have been in the field of basic education. Those who have made offers relating to basic education include: The Gambia, Lesotho and Sierra Leone, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico and

Panama; China, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic and Thailand. Of course many of these offers may have been very precisely defined and may not represent a threat to the core education system.

However there is a strong case for keeping a close eye on how this develops in the coming years. To date countries like Sierra Leone that have opened up their education system for investment have not attracted foreign investors. But as public-private partnerships in schools become more widespread in the North, the prospect of big for-profit (or others disguised as not-for-profit) providers looking to extend into poorer countries is very real. Twenty-five years ago few would have imagined that profits could be made from a universal natural resource like water – but this has changed very dramatically. Is such a change possible in basic education?

One particular concern is the large number of “requests” made to India (where companies from Australia, Brazil, Japan, Singapore and the US amongst others have requested access). It is important to better understand the sort of requests that are being made and the possible direction such requests may take in future. Fortunately, India has not “offered” any part of its system and so nothing will happen immediately. It is when a “request”

and an “offer” coincide that things become serious ... indeed, they become binding and irreversible.

### **ActionAid’s position on GATS and education**

ActionAid now needs to decide how to position itself in relation to GATS and education. The broad parameters are clear. ActionAid is strongly against the liberalisation of education. But more concrete evidence is needed on the impact (and possible future impact) of GATS on basic education to help hone our position. Please share any information you have on the impact of GATS on education in your country/region with Akanksha.

The International Education Team will be part of the ActionAid delegation observing the ministerial meetings of the WTO in Hong Kong (13th–18th December). There is a case for ActionAid communicating with governmental representatives to the WTO in Africa, Asia and Latin America – to ensure that they hold back from offering up education under GATS – warning them of the devastating consequences. ActionAid could work within the WTO to demand the formation of a subcommittee for the clarification of the GATS text regarding basic education – introducing recognition of basic education as a fundamental right.

### **The invisible hand**

In reviewing the data available it seems the key player in promoting or facilitating liberalisation and privatisation in education is the International Monetary Fund (IMF). ActionAid’s recent reports on the IMF (*Contradicting Commitments* and *Changing Course*) show how its policies make it impossible for governments to run decent public education systems, often including privatisation as a loan conditionality or leaving resource-strapped governments with little choice but to open up to private providers. Fingers can also be pointed at the World Bank, which increasingly promotes privatisation in the education sector as a key policy. At times it openly calls for support to the export of educational services to developing countries, as a profitable way to satisfy increased demand. International Finance Corporation (IFC), which is a member of the World Bank Group, promotes sustainable private sector investment in developing countries. IFC operations are presently focused on the tertiary education sub-sector but could easily extend. There are e-debates now promoted by the World Bank that present distorted pictures of the private sector’s involvement in education. Not surprisingly, the rapid privatisation of education is further supported by the US administration’s national education policy (No Child Left Behind) which pushes private sector involvement in the US.

## Access 2 knowledge: a call for global action

Another area where the WTO may have a profound impact is in respect of intellectual property rights as they affect access to knowledge or provision of quality education. *Achal Prabhala* in South Africa and *Manon Ress* in the USA wrote a compelling report for ActionAid, outlining the rationale for the ‘access to knowledge’ campaign. This article provides a summary of the insights from their report.

The currents and counter-currents around copyright and access to knowledge are coming to a head in the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO’s agreement on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was largely the product of lobbying by a handful of companies from the pharmaceutical, entertainment and software industries. As the WTO/TRIPS norms become enforceable, and as the US and the EU have very aggressive sanctions to push for enforcement in national laws (through trade agreements), it becomes important for national governments to wake up to the potential and existing impact of intellectual property rights on education.

### Copyright and Education

Copyright is a bundle of rights, meaning that copyright laws grant the creator the exclusive right to reproduce, prepare derivative works, distribute, perform and display the work publicly. In general, copyright law makes no distinction between learning and entertainment. Thus, cultural commodities as diverse as pop music, computer software for business, an engineering textbook and a beginner’s guide to the English alphabet are all governed under the same set of regulations. While the umbrella of protection provided by copyright law is to some extent justified (given the difficulty of separating ‘entertainment’ from ‘knowledge’), industry lobbies from software and entertainment have used their considerable size to lobby for a copyright policy that best suits their short-term revenue generation

prospects – with no regard to its impact on education.

The traditional publishing industry has not been far behind. Locally, regionally and internationally, book publishers have urged on a stricter copyright regime, often riding on the backs of their better capitalised partners – since quite often, large book publishers are merely one part of an integrated media conglomerate.

The effects of these ever-tighter copyright laws on access to knowledge are multiple:

**Excessive Pricing:** In South Africa, to take just one instance, the price of books prescribed in secondary and tertiary school curricula is routinely 2–4 times the price of the equivalent book in the US and the UK. The table below compares prices for the cheapest locally available edition across a few popular textbooks.

	South Africa	USA	UK
J.M. Coetzee’s <i>Disgrace</i>	\$21.70	\$10.15	\$10.15
Nelson Mandela’s <i>Long Walk to Freedom</i>	\$23.70	\$11.60	\$16.30
Oxford English Dictionary	\$44.61	\$20.46	\$24.00

The average income in the UK is roughly 10 times that in South Africa, and the average income in the USA is roughly 12 times higher. What this means, effectively, is that the *cost of knowledge in South Africa* is disproportionately high as a measure of income, as compared to the USA and UK. In practical terms, it is the equivalent of users in the UK paying \$ 230 for a paperback edition of Mandela’s autobiography, or users in the USA paying \$ 535 for a copy of the Oxford English Dictionary – an untenable situation in either country, though exactly the same exists in South Africa today.

**Unavailability:** In less-industrialised countries in the South (such as in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa), textbooks, particularly for secondary or higher education, are routinely unavailable. In subjects without strict contextual limits (such as the physical sciences, engineering and medicine – and unlike, for example, history), tertiary institutions in the South rely on established expertise from the North, and prescribe published textbooks from those markets. The books in question are available at the whim of the publisher, the wholesaler or the distributor – who in many cases might not consider it profitable enough to supply a market adequately, or at all. In situations of excessive pricing and unavailability, copyright law prevents cheap local reproductions, or ‘parallel imports’ in cases where the equivalent educational material may be more cheaply available from another country.

**Unsuitability:** In many countries of the South, the cost of producing textbooks in diverse national languages is a major obstacle to ensuring equal access to learning. Some countries make great efforts to ensure that children can learn in their mother tongue in the early stages of the education system. But

every time a government, or a local publisher wishes to translate or adapt a core text from its original language a license fee has to be paid and this can be not only cumbersome to obtain, but also prohibitively expensive. So books go un-translated, mother-tongue education is compromised and children are forced to learn in unsuitable languages.

Once students enter secondary or tertiary education dominant national languages (often former colonial languages) take over fully. It is almost impossible to change this because there is a near total lack

of learning materials in any other language and traditional multinational publishers see the dominant languages as the only commercially viable ones.

‘Non-mainstream’ students – like the sensory disabled and distance learners, also lose out. Distance learners, for example, comprise the largest component of South Africa’s tertiary education student-base. However, they find the cost of their education is crippling, in part due to distance learning institutions having to pay excessive copyright license fees (to adapt book content into formats suitable for long distance instruction).

**So:** The net result is that governments face an impossible position. Already, education in the South is a resource-constrained exercise: it is hard enough to pay teachers and cover other basic costs. Industry-led copyright policies lead to excessive pricing, limited adaptability and unavailability of suitable learning materials. Increasingly governments won’t be able to afford to put books in schools: many already cannot. And we know that if these costs are passed on to parents, many won’t be able to pay. This will force children out of the system or condemn them to a second rate education in which they only ever capture momentary glimpses of a text book, as is the situation in Southern Africa today.

### **The a2k campaign**

In recent years, there has been a consolidation of movements working for ‘access to knowledge’ ([www.cptech.org/a2k](http://www.cptech.org/a2k)), building on previous and ongoing efforts for access to information and education rights in general. Similar to the access to medicines campaign (where industry-led patent rules posed a threat to public health), the a2k campaign seeks to raise awareness around, and rectify, a situation where industry-led copyright policies are making education an increasingly difficult task.

The motivation to investigate industry-led notions of copyright comes from observation and documentation of restrictions on



access to knowledge. The a2k campaign responds to a situation where Southern countries already facing massive resource constraints to deliver education, now find that copyright law is adding impossible new costs to their education budgets.

The a2k campaign emerges at a time when copyright industries are pushing for a stricter intellectual property (IP) regime that will be to the further detriment of students everywhere, particularly in poor countries. Flexibilities in copyright law, that national governments could use in sovereign interest – for education – are now under threat.

This campaign aims to put these hidden issues onto the agenda: looking at access to knowledge, access to information goods, access to educational tools, and access to technology. Thus far, it has aimed to link academics, government delegates and development advocates in the North and South. The campaign sees access to knowledge as a human right and a fundamental development prerogative.

Martin Khor of the Third World Network notes: *“The public’s access to knowledge is increasingly hindered by imbalanced intellectual property regimes which are tilted to the advantage of IP holders vis-à-vis users and consumers, and there is a need to establish a treaty or at least*

*principles to redress this imbalance as part of a “development agenda” for dealing with intellectual property protection.”*

The a2k campaign is fairly new and is still being defined. One important element of the campaign is the effort to define and advocate for a new ‘Treaty on Access to Knowledge’.

In 2005, two large consultations were held on the possible elements of such an a2k treaty. The first consultation was hosted by the Consumer Project on Technology, the Third World Network and the International Federation of Libraries Associations and Institutions. The second consultation was organized by the Trans-Atlantic Consumer Dialogue. These consultations were well attended, with contributions from activists and academics from a broad spectrum – consumer rights, education, free/open source software, libraries, and disabled rights – as well as innovative businesses and several governments (in particular Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt and India, and the South Centre IGO). In August 2005 an inclusive committee produced the draft text of a possible treaty, which is subject to further consultation and revision.

ActionAid is now looking at how it can add value to the Access to Knowledge campaign.

For now, the International Education Team is exploring two further studies on the impact of intellectual property rights on education, hopefully with the support of the Open Society Foundation:

1. The first study will look at the impact of copyright laws on the development, production and distribution of textbooks in the global South and the explicit role of intellectual property rights and multinational companies. It will touch on the impact of present and future regulations on national publishing industries and on prices, availability and suitability of textbooks. It will consider the wider ramifications on the quality of education, on the literate environment/culture and on national sovereignty and ownership.
2. The second study will explore the viability of an alternative – Open Content Licences – as the way forward for educational materials. We could campaign for all governments and donors to require that textbooks are produced under ‘Open Content Licences’ which means they can be adapted or translated without further charges. This would empower teachers in different districts of a country to adapt generic material from textbooks into relevant teaching/learning materials for their own context. It would reduce dependency on one-size-fits-all textbooks and could give meaningful decision-making over teaching/learning resources and processes to decentralised structures. This might lead to more open and collaborative processes of textbook production.

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## Forging a Global Movement: New Education Strategies for the US & the World – A project by ActionAid International USA

In January 2005, ActionAid International USA ([www.actionaidusa.org](http://www.actionaidusa.org)) and Just Associates ([www.justassociates.org](http://www.justassociates.org)) began working on a research, networking and advocacy planning process called *Forging a Global Movement: New Education Strategies for the US & the World*.

The first phase of the project focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the intersections between international education policies and US domestic education issues and politics, identifying advocacy gaps and opportunities, and building relationships with potential partners.

This initial phase culminated in a Roundtable Discussion held on 11th–12th July 2005 in Washington DC. The discussion brought together 22 education advocates, organizers and activist scholars from the US and Global South. The broad goal of this meeting was to assess the potential for expanded learning, networking and stronger international solidarity. Key insights from the research, the Roundtable and first e-dialogue are summarized below.

Advocates in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are working to construct vibrant movements, incorporating broad popular coalitions in many countries to build support for committing public resources toward quality education for all. These struggles are producing valuable lessons about linking policy change efforts with citizen participation, framing education demands in terms of human rights and clarifying the significant but often hidden impacts of economic and trade frameworks.

US advocates, frustrated by the challenges of the particular political moment, and increasingly aware of the connections and similarities between problems at home and abroad, are now more than ever, interested in opportunities for exchange and mutual learning. Few Americans however are completely aware of how US policies affect education systems throughout the world. The role of the US government in shaping global education outcomes is especially

significant. Through its foreign trade policies and the policies of international institutions subject to its influence, the US government wields enormous power over the choices and opportunities available to citizens and governments seeking to improve education, particularly in poor and/or indebted nations. It is through expanded opportunities for dialogue, exchange and joint action that we can effectively challenge policies and interests that limit the right to education worldwide.

### Shared realities

Overall, education advocates, organizers, and programme planners working in different contexts appear to share a measure of common ground. For example:

- The roots of powerlessness and exclusion in the global South and countries in the North seem to stem from underlying issues of race, ethnicity, socio-economic class and gender. These factors determine access to quality education and often keep the interests of certain groups off the decision-making table.
- At the policy level, the trend toward shrinking government resources and diminishing accountability for essential public services is impacting school systems everywhere, although the specific policies and politics may vary widely in different countries.
- Public education systems everywhere struggle with dysfunctional bureaucracies; poor quality facilities, insufficient teachers and materials; and an ever more reductive focus on examinations and rote learning as opposed to student-centred, interactive and thought-provoking education.

*This article is based on the forthcoming policy report written by Akanksha A. Marphatia of ActionAid International and Molly Reilly of Just Associates.*

- There is a shared gulf between the rhetoric and practice of citizen participation and democracy.

### Emerging trends

A number of similar trends cast new light on the complexity of the struggle for quality education. Some are familiar, such as privatisation and the huge impact of economic and trade frameworks and institutions (such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization) on education options and outcomes. Other trends, such as the normalization of violence and militarism in schools are emerging. Together, these trends signal the need to re-conceptualize education, democracy and citizenship. This need to transform the ‘culture of politics’ is creating opportunities for international solidarity building worldwide.

### Privatization

The threat that privatization, in its many forms, presents to quality public education everywhere is serious. The term privatization is shorthand for a complex web of policies, processes and ideology that demand clearer understanding and definition. Governments in the global South have been constrained from delivering quality public education by economic policies imposed from the North. Many have been forced to open up (particularly tertiary) education services to private, and sometimes foreign, companies through policies, programmes and funding conditionalities imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO – through the Global Agreement on Trade and Tariffs). How far this will extend to basic education is yet to be fully seen but these are worrying trends. School voucher schemes in the US subsidize the cost of private school for parents wishing to move their children from public schools of poor quality. Experience has shown that private schools do not necessarily provide a higher quality of education than public schools but

they are still successful in undermining confidence in the public education system. Those who can afford to pay are sucked out of the system, removing the middle classes from public schools and diminishing the political leverage for reform that middle class parents can bring to bear.

There is a lively debate about strategic responses to privatisation: What are the appropriate roles for government, civil society (NGOs, non-profit organizations, etc.), and the market in fulfilling the right to education? What dangers exist when the roles are blurred? What are our responsibilities as education advocates in contexts where the government lacks the funds, capacity or political accountability to provide decent public education for all? How significant is the risk that well-intended efforts to fill the gaps may in fact help governments shed their role in fulfilling the right to education – or even play into the hands of the privatizers? Under what conditions is it politically strategic for non-profits, NGOs, or concerned people to provide education services? When should organizing strategies address problems in government capacity and accountability?

### Education, democracy & transforming the culture of politics

These trends underline the importance of building global connections so that people in the North and South can learn from each other. The Global Campaign for Education is an excellent foundation for this but to date, activist groups in the North who are concerned with education in their own countries, have not been linked up to this movement. There is a real gap at present in linking grassroots activists from community-based organizations and parent groups in the North and South.

While education is often invoked as the foundation of democracy, the reality is that both concepts appear to be shrinking to the status of commodities in our lives. Education is increasingly viewed as a retail item that parents ‘shop’ for among

competing sellers to ensure that their children will enjoy wealthy and prestigious futures. Similarly, political life is less a deep conversation about what it means to be part of a community and more an array of meaningless choices and slick marketing. How to respond?

It takes a variety of political strategies to realize a right in people’s lives. Lessons learned from Brazil’s national campaign for the right to education illustrate that it is possible to combine efforts to change policies and outcomes with longer-term strategies aimed at involving new players and transforming the way decisions about schools are made. Successful pressure to change policies has come when parents of children and students in public schools organize and mobilize to become powerful advocates for reforming and strengthening public education whether in the global South or the US.

These diverse experiences give new meaning to the idea of a participatory democracy. They present alternative ways of doing politics and challenge us to think clearly about gaps in our strategies and explore creative organizing methodologies and approaches that move beyond sharing information and ‘mobilizing’ people to build the skills, confidence, political consciousness, and organization needed for long-term change.

How can we refine our political strategies to emphasize the active citizenship and constituency-building needed to hold governments and other powerful institutions accountable? How would these work when there is a gradual withdrawal of the state from its obligations to provide public education due to a shortage of resources and global trends? Ideas include:

- Engage in empowering processes that build consciousness and active citizenship about the right to a high quality education.
- Re-politicise education and confront the conservative, neo liberal agenda of privatisation and disinvestment in public education.
- Refocus on what education is really for by creating schools that

are democratic, accountable, just and transformative.

- Promote more complex and nuanced understanding of the causes and symptoms of poverty, lack of rights and gender inequality.
- Engage in advocacy as a political process that involves coordinated efforts in changing existing practices, ideas and distribution of power and resources that exclude women and other disadvantaged groups.

## NEXT STEPS

### School visit

An event bringing together local (New York or Washington) and international education activists for dialogue and exchange is planned in February 2006. This is intended to deepen the discussion on common challenges faced in schools by students, teachers, parents and communities worldwide. It will also focus on sharing strategies on effectively engaging communities with schools and on the overall policy dialogue with governments. We hope to foster excitement around connecting US activists and constituencies into the rights-based global movement.

### Expanding the network

Building a vibrant and successful movement for education rights in the US, which is truly connected to the emerging movements globally, will take time and energy. This project aims to create opportunities where groups from differing nations can work together in a sustained fashion, to deepen mutual understanding or to collectively explore important questions from a range of perspectives. It will also require expanding the current group to include activists who can join in this reflection, sharing and learning process.

To find out more about the project and join the network:

- Keep a look out for the November Policy Paper on this initiative.
- Contact Akanksha Marphatia: [akanksha.marphatia@actionaid.org](mailto:akanksha.marphatia@actionaid.org)

## “World Bank support to primary education: an unfinished agenda”

As part of its evaluation of World Bank investments in basic education since 1990, the Operations Evaluations Department (OED) of the World Bank has conducted country studies in Peru, Mali and Pakistan. The studies are deeply disturbing and suggest that the World Bank needs to make some fundamental changes to the way it operates in the education sector. David Archer has been following this evaluation as part of an external panel, which comments on how the World Bank has framed and conducted the evaluation. Below he provides a short summary of 10 critical issues that have emerged from the panel’s discussions of the existing studies and the first draft of the report (which cannot yet be quoted directly). These comments add up to an agenda for future Bank investments in education. The next edition of Education Action will review the final published evaluation report, which is due to be published in early 2006.

### 1. Don’t shift resources away from primary education and Africa

The OED evaluation suggests there is an alarming shift in World Bank investment away from primary education – effectively abandoning the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) agenda. There is an increasing investment in secondary and particularly higher education – which is likely to come from the existing education budget unless a strong position is taken. A case can be made that the Bank should invest at least 20% of its funding in education (in line with advice to countries), much higher than the present spend of about 7%, but this needs to be argued vigorously. A related concern is that the Bank has also not been very successful in reallocating education funding from middle income to low income countries where the greatest MDG needs remain. The most rapid growth in borrowing for primary education has been in East and Central Europe and the greatest volume of borrowing has been in Latin America. But the greatest need is in Africa and in South Asia.

### 2. Facing up to the resource gap

The OED evaluations suggest that past Bank investments have focussed too much on access at the expense of quality and that a new priority should be placed on learning outcomes. If this is the case then the resource gap for achieving primary education goals is larger than ever. Existing projections are already

based on unrealistic projections of fast economic growth, tend to underestimate the cost of responding to HIV/AIDS and do not include demand side subsidies. In response to this there is a clear need for the Bank to increase its own investments in primary education rather than reduce them. To shift away from primary when the resource gap is larger than ever would be irresponsible and scandalous!

### 3. Don’t ignore user fees!

The global consensus on the importance of eliminating user fees has never been stronger (cf. UN Summit in New York) and the political momentum behind this has also never been greater (cf. the latest elimination in Burundi). The shocking fact that user fees are still charged in primary education in 92 countries has never been better documented (see Katarina Tomasevski’s article) and the negative impact of fees on poor children has never been clearer (of the wave of seven million new enrolments across East Africa). Yet the OED seem reluctant to comment on the Bank’s past, present or future role in influencing government policies on school fees and helping to finance universal free education. Bank policy has undergone a very major shift in the past 15 years and it is worth assessing in more detail. It would be good for the OED to send a positive signal to get the Bank to become a proactive champion of fully free

education. Whilst it is clearly important to focus on 'learning outcomes' it would be wrong to abandon the access agenda when 100 million children are still out of school. Many countries will (for different, often political reasons) eliminate fees in the coming years and this will be a major threat to learning outcomes if enrolments expand and the Bank and other donors to not react rapidly. The Bank should prioritize working with countries that charge fees to help them urgently develop a three or five year plan to eliminate all costs in a planned way. The Bank should be upfront about making the abolition of fees a top priority!

#### **4. Breaking the silence on HIV/AIDS**

It is shocking that country studies did not raise HIV/AIDS as a issue despite this being in the terms of reference. The impact of HIV/AIDS on education in the past fifteen years is one of the biggest developments in the sector, particularly in Africa. The role that education plays in helping respond to HIV/AIDS is crucial and yet still under-regarded. The OED evaluation should, at the very least, make a big issue of the fact that the reports did not touch on HIV/AIDS.

#### **5. Take a stronger stand against private schools**

There are some very dangerous myths being spread, including with support of the WB (e.g. the International Finance Corporation/Edinvest), that private schools might offer a solution to access or quality issues. A strong stand needs to be taken showing the negative impact these have on equity. Often, unfair biases against girls, which the public sector is working to overcome, may get reasserted through the proliferation of private schools. This is particularly important as there is no proper evidence globally that learning outcomes are better in private schools (especially when allowing for their selected intake). The sad truth is that children and parents are being cheated in many cases – frustrated by the public schools they are conned into



Kalpeesh Lathigra/NB Pictures/ActionAid

thinking private schools will do better. The little evidence that does suggest better performance by private schools is almost entirely based on greater accountability – the fact that teachers actually turn up. The Bank's focus should be on how to improve accountability in the public school system.

#### **6. Contradicting commitments: talk to the IMF!**

The country studies done by OED show again and again that Bank investments in education have been undermined by macro-economic constraints on governments, whether it is the freeze on hiring of teachers in Pakistan, the retrenchment of 12.5% of teachers in Mali or low spending in Peru linked to IMF policies. This fits with the experiences of other countries documented by ActionAid in *Contradicting Commitments* (see IMF article on page 14). Governments cannot even contemplate the 'trade offs' between a rise of 1% in inflation and the recruitment of more teachers – as the inflation target is sacrosanct. Economists talk openly of the 'sacrifice ratio' whereby investments in education and health are sacrificed in the name of macro-economic stability. It is important for the World Bank to take a stand on these contradictions and to send a clear message to the IMF. Building new schools is of little value if governments are at the same time blocked from employing new

teachers. The Bank should be championing the benefits of investment in education and helping countries remove the constraints that prevent them for making such a sound investment.

#### **7. The conflation of EFA/UPE persists**

The World Bank seems to constantly conflate Education For All with Universal Primary Education. The impact that the reductive focus on UPE has had on the rest of the EFA agenda should be part of this evaluation but to date has not been. This is particularly important now given the new evidence of the importance of adult literacy (see the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006* and *Writing the Wrongs*). The importance of early childhood education and home environment on learning outcomes are recurrent themes in the country studies. Little progress can be made on learning outcomes if we fail to consider the role of early childhood education and adult literacy (which is key to the home environment).

#### **8. Donor coordination/ relinquishing some power**

The country studies show that there is much rhetoric about donor coordination and sector-wide approaches but few places where this is followed through – even though it is widely seen to be desirable. Parallel Project Implementation Units, widely

acknowledged as part of the problem, continue. One of the difficulties is that shifting to genuine donor coordination behind government-led plans involves a relinquishing of power and this is not easy for the World Bank. The World Bank is the leading actor globally on education (though Unesco may be expected to play this role, the reality of resources means the Bank occupies this space) and needs to lead by example.

Recent updating of the World Bank's sector strategy indicates that future Bank investments in primary education will prioritize the Fast Track Initiative. The FTI is clearly in line with OECD DAC models of good practice in aid effectiveness. Although there are areas where urgent reform are needed (e.g. in relation to the indicative framework on teacher salaries and on the failure to focus on learning outcomes) the FTI warrants stronger support across the World Bank than it has received to date.

### **9. Quality outcomes depend on quality teachers**

The elephant under the table in most Bank documents on education is teacher pay. The country reports show how the pay, status and conditions of teachers have fallen in recent years. The Bank in general has been reluctant to cover recurrent costs such as teacher salaries and yet this is what countries most desperately need. Teacher salaries are the vast bulk of the education budget and if donors refuse to pay for this then they are meddling at the margins. Particularly in cases where enrolments rise dramatically (e.g. after eliminating fees) more teachers are needed and the Bank needs to be willing to respond if learning outcomes are to be preserved or improved.

Specifically the spread of non-professional teachers is something that has been actively supported by the Bank and this warrants close documentation and critical comments in the OED report. We are not going to improve learning outcomes without improving the quality of teachers on whom

learning depends. There is an urgent need in many countries for more teachers who are better paid and better trained. Central to achieving this is that donors, led by the Bank, need to make long-term predictable aid available, framed with a ten-year perspective so that governments can use these resources to coherently plan teacher numbers and employ teachers. It will also involve the Bank being willing to make the case for investment in teachers to the IMF so that macro-economic constraints do not get in the way of this sound economic investment.

### **10. Accountability at all levels**

The country reports show the importance of improving accountability but do not follow this through fully. If we want to improve accountability at local levels then centre-led or top down initiatives may not be effective. This is an area where bottom-up work is important and where civil society organisations can also make a real difference. NGOs can play an important role in capacity building of parents/local people – linking this to wider empowerment processes. One critical area concerns education budgets. CSOs in recent years have been doing increasing work in demystifying education budgets, training people to track them and empowering people to ask question about school budgets. This work needs to be encouraged and supported. Taking district officials to court for misuse of public education funds has been shown to have a significant effect on improving accountability in countries like Uganda and Kenya.

But community-level accountability needs to be matched by district and national level accountability. Federations of parents groups can play an important role and national civil society coalitions or alliances can also play a watchdog role or be critical friends to education ministries. Many national education coalitions are now working to strengthen parliamentary committees on education or cross-party parliamentary caucuses.

## **Future directions**

The OED evaluation to date has shown a disturbing history of Bank programmes funding education with their head in the sand. Much of the funding goes on infrastructure and the reports show that this has little impact at all when done in the absence of a more integrated approach and a focus on learning outcomes. There is a role for infrastructure (more schools are needed!) but this must be part of a sector wide programme. It is clear that future investments should:

- Be long term and predictable – for at least 10 years so that finance ministries feel confident they can use the funds to cover recurrent costs such as teacher salaries (and can plan to cover these costs progressively from domestic sources as economic returns from better education systems are felt).
- Be based on government led and nationally owned plans.
- Reduce the number of education policy conditionalities attached to sector loans or to wider Bank/Fund financing instruments.
- Reduce or eliminate 'cross-conditionality' e.g. between Poverty Reduction Strategies and FTI (so that countries with great education plans don't lose out on funding because the banks have not been privatised).
- Be coordinated with other donors/working with a basket approach.
- Include strategies to ensure that accountability for progress on education is towards parliaments/national citizens rather than towards donors.
- Be sector wide – addressing all EFA, considering HIV/AIDS systematically and putting infrastructure as one part of integrated programmes not as a stand-alone.
- Be willing to cover recurrent costs/provide budget support.
- Be focused on quality outcomes.
- Be ready to respond quickly to significant political moments such as the abolition of user fees.

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## Writing the Wrongs: Invest in Adult Literacy now!

The Global Campaign for Education and ActionAid have recently published *Writing the Wrongs: International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy*. This work, undertaken by David Archer and Yaikah Jeng, argues that present under-investment in adult literacy is a global scandal. This publication, based on detailed consultation with programmes in 35 countries and advice from people in over 50 countries shows that there is a strong consensus about what policy makers and practitioners should do. Insights from this work have been compiled into twelve simple benchmarks to guide future work and catalyse new investment in adult literacy.

There are nearly one billion adults who cannot read and write, according to UNESCO statistics. The real figure is probably nearer to two billion and still more if numeracy and the actual use of these skills are taken into account. Most of these are people living in extreme poverty. Almost two-thirds are women, and nearly 1 in 5 is a young person between 15 and 24. Yet these people have been abandoned in recent decades. Although governments worldwide have signed up to a UN goal that promises a 50% reduction in illiteracy by 2015, they are investing scandalously little in programmes to deliver that goal.

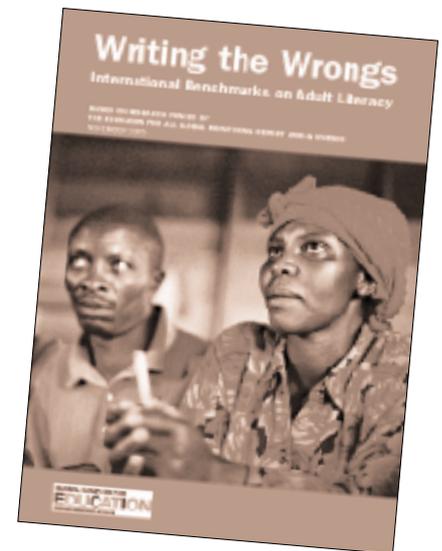
Illiteracy is a violation of the fundamental human right to education. But if that is not argument enough, the Global Campaign for Education believes that there are five compelling practical reasons for governments and donors to invest now in adult literacy:

- *Literacy is vital to reducing gender inequality.* Literacy increases women's participation in both private and public spheres, in household decision-making, community affairs and as active citizens in national life. Adult literacy programmes have a dramatic impact on women's self-esteem, empowering them to unlock economic, social, cultural and political resources.
- *Adult literacy is critical for the healthy development and education of children, especially girls.* Each extra year of education for mothers is associated with a significant

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decline in infant mortality and improved child-health. More literate parents raise more literate children. Children with parents (especially mothers) who can read and write stay in school longer and achieve more.

- *Literacy is vital to human and economic development.* Improving literacy levels would deliver significant economic benefits both for individuals and for countries. Multi-country studies show clear connections between literacy levels in a country and both economic output and GDP per capita growth. By the same token, current high rates of illiteracy among women and the poor are limiting the impact of programmes designed to boost livelihoods, improve incomes, protect the environment, deliver clean water, promote civic participation and democracy, and fight killer diseases. Unless the intended target group possesses basic literacy and numeracy skills, many of these programmes will not work properly, and there is even a risk



that those who already have power and resources (who tend to be more literate and male) will capture the benefits.

- *Literacy is vital for fighting AIDS.* The AIDS pandemic is creating a lost generation of orphans and vulnerable children who are growing up without an education. As the World Bank has warned, if left unchecked this trend could cripple African economies for decades to come. Adult literacy programmes can play a crucial role in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and enabling communities to respond to a world in which HIV/AIDS affects every dimension of their lives. Large-scale provision of adult literacy programmes is also essential to provide a safety net of second chance education for AIDS orphans (as well as for the many other young people who are affected every year by war or natural disasters that force them out of school and into harmful forms of child labour).
- *Adult literacy programmes work.* Finally, the research contained in this report shows that, contrary to conventional wisdom in the donor community, adult literacy programmes can be both affordable and effective. This is reinforced by recent research, not least the studies commissioned by the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006*. This demolishes any remaining excuse for governments and donors to avoid their responsibilities to the world's illiterate youth and adults.

Literacy, in short, is the fertilizer needed for development and democracy to take root and grow. It is the invisible ingredient in any successful strategy for eradicating poverty. Unfortunately, in recent years it has become all too invisible.

The UN Education for All (EFA) goals, as agreed in Jomtien in 1990 and re-affirmed at Dakar in 2000 include a strong commitment to lifelong learning and a promise to reduce illiteracy by 50% by the year 2015. Many practitioners believe, however, that the EFA movement post-Dakar has focused funds and political will almost exclusively on the expansion of formal primary schooling, to the detriment of non-traditional sectors such as adult and early childhood education.

This is not only unacceptable but extremely short-sighted. Education for All will make the greatest contribution to development and poverty reduction if it is genuinely “for all” – targeting all social groups in need of basic skills and knowledge, not just those under the age of 12. Although the task of getting every child into school is both urgent and demanding, the intense effort that is needed to achieve universal primary education need not and should not come at the expense of the other dimensions of EFA. Moreover, as discussed below, adult literacy is intrinsically linked to the success of the other EFA goals. Our research suggests that the EFA literacy goal could be attained with as little as 3% of the Ministry

of Education’s annual budget.

For some time, governments and donors have taken refuge in the widespread notion that literacy programmes don’t work or that you simply cannot teach adults, at least not in large-scale programmes. This is nonsense. It is contradicted by the successes of many past adult literacy programmes, particularly in post-revolutionary contexts where there was real political will and sustained momentum. But precisely because so few programmes are now ongoing, it has been difficult to find more recent evidence of success, particularly in a simple and practical

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form that planners and policy-makers can use.

This study is the largest-ever attempt to systematise experience of what works in adult literacy. We analyzed *67 successful literacy programmes in 35 countries* in order to see whether they shared any common features that could be simplified into concrete, hands-on benchmarks or guidelines for policy-makers. Although no one, least of all the GCE, would advocate a ‘blueprint’ approach to literacy, there was remarkable consensus among the practitioners we surveyed as to the basic ingredients for success. This was reinforced by the positive feedback we received to early drafts of these benchmarks from *142 respondents in 47 countries* (including policy makers and practitioners from governments, NGOs and universities). It turns out that we do know what works in adult literacy programmes and there is no great mystery to it. There are clear steps that can be taken to design and manage good quality, cost-effective programmes – and where this is done they can yield exceptional results.

### The Benchmarks

The benchmarks that are set out on the next page are designed to facilitate serious planning to achieve the Dakar ‘Education for All’ goal of a 50% reduction in adult illiteracy by 2015, which has been endorsed by 185 governments around the world. They have been developed by experts in adult literacy from around the world and are based on responses to a global survey of effective adult literacy programmes.

We hope these benchmarks will provide a starting point for policy dialogue between governments, funding agencies, NGOs, and those adults who have been deprived of their right to education. They might also be used as a checklist against which a government or donor might ask questions about an existing or proposed programme. However, they are not intended as a blueprint or a set of conditions. Our research affirms the widely shared insight of experienced practitioners that the success of any literacy programme depends on flexibility to respond to unique local needs and circumstances.



Kate Holt/Evevine/ActionAid

## The Benchmarks

1. Literacy is about the acquisition and use of reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality. The goals of literacy programmes should reflect this understanding.
2. Literacy should be seen as a continuous process that requires sustained learning and application. There are no magic lines to cross from illiteracy into literacy. All policies and programmes should be defined to encourage sustained participation and celebrate progressive achievement rather than focusing on one-off provision with a single end point.
3. Governments have the lead responsibility in meeting the right to adult literacy and in providing leadership, policy frameworks, an enabling environment and resources. They should:
  - ensure cooperation across all relevant ministries and links to all relevant development programmes;
  - work in systematic collaboration with experienced civil society organisations;
  - ensure links between all these agencies, especially at the local level; and
  - ensure relevance to the issues in learners' lives by promoting the decentralisation of budgets and of decision-making over curriculum, methods and materials.
4. It is important to invest in ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, data systematization and strategic research. The focus of evaluations should be on the practical application of what has been learnt and the impact on active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.
5. To retain facilitators it is important that they should be paid at least the equivalent of the minimum wage of a primary school teacher for all hours worked (including time for training, preparation and follow-up).
6. Facilitators should be local people who receive substantial initial training and regular refresher training, as well as having ongoing opportunities for exchanges with other facilitators. Governments should put in place a framework for the professional development of the adult literacy sector, including
  - for trainers/ supervisors – with full opportunities for facilitators across the country to access this (e.g. through distance education).
7. There should be a ratio of at least one facilitator to 30 learners and at least one trainer/supervisor to 15 learner groups (1 to 10 in remote areas), ensuring a minimum of one support visit per month. Programmes should have timetables that flexibly respond to the daily lives of learners but which provide for regular and sustained contact (e.g. twice a week for at least two years).
8. In multi-lingual contexts it is important at all stages that learners should be given an active choice about the language in which they learn. Active efforts should be made to encourage and sustain bilingual learning.
9. A wide range of participatory methods should be used in the learning process to ensure active engagement of learners and relevance to their lives. These same participatory methods and processes should be used at all levels of training of trainers and facilitators.
10. Governments should take responsibility for stimulating the market for production and distribution of a wide variety of materials suitable for new readers, for example by working with publishers/newspaper producers. They should balance this with funding for the local production of materials, especially by learners, facilitators and trainers.
11. A good quality literacy programme that respects all these benchmarks is likely to cost between US\$50 and US\$100 per learner per year for at least three years (two years initial learning plus ensuring further learning opportunities are available for all).
12. Governments should dedicate at least 3% of their national education sector budgets to adult literacy programmes as conceived in these benchmarks. Where governments deliver on this international donors should fill any remaining resource gaps (e.g. through including adult literacy in the Fast Track Initiative).

## Time for Action

In the past two decades, as governments have withdrawn from meaningful investment in adult literacy, NGOs – including many of the member organizations of the Global Campaign for Education – have stepped into the gap. NGOs have played an important role and should continue to do so, but only governments can ensure that all citizens, including adults, have access to the quality basic education that is their right. Moreover, improved

literacy rates will help governments to achieve their own goals for economic growth, gender equality, and poverty reduction. Governments must therefore re-engage in literacy, with full support from the donor community; and this study shows that for those who are willing, the way forward is clear.

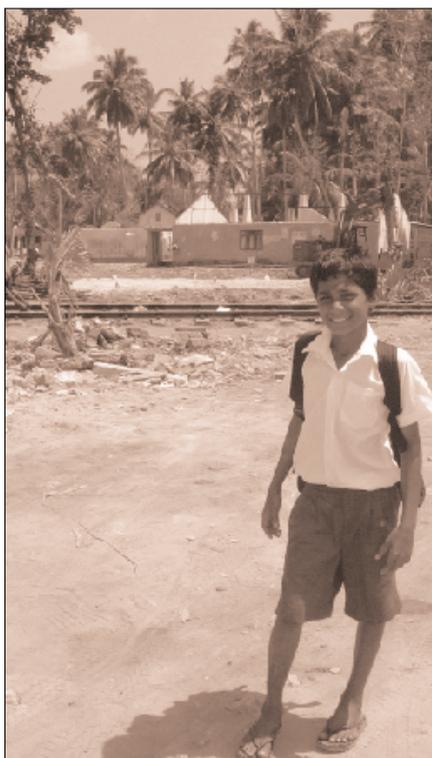
Indeed, these benchmarks have backing from key experts in governments who are still engaged in adult literacy work – from countries as diverse as China, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Nigeria, Ghana,

Namibia and Ireland. They also have support from a wide range of key people in multilateral and bilateral agencies and from international NGOs, national NGOs, social movements and academics. It has long been known that investing in the education of adults has dramatic economic, social, cultural and political returns for a country. Now that adult literacy programmes have also been shown to be practical, affordable and effective, there is no further excuse to deny adults their chance to learn.

## Back to school: ActionAid responds to the Tsunami in Sri Lanka

Around 300 schools were destroyed or severely damaged by the Tsunami in Sri Lanka. Many children and teachers died and others suffered emotional trauma. Getting children back to school was an early priority for Saroj Das of ActionAid, recognising the immense significance of functioning schools to the normalisation of communities and lives.

After its initial emergency and relief work, ActionAid rapidly focused on education. Just over a month after the Tsunami hit Sri Lanka, ActionAid worked with a wide range of national NGOs and citizen's groups to explore appropriate responses. It rapidly became clear that existing government policy was not working and most children were not returning to school. There was confusion between immediate and long-term responses. So ActionAid worked together with its new partners, The Citizen's Education Coalition, to develop the following statement which laid out an agenda for our engagement over the following months.



### CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

We are deeply concerned that most Tsunami affected children are still not in school. Each day that passes deepens the psycho-social problems they face. The nation must prioritize getting all children back to school within two weeks.

Existing policy is not working. Children do not want to commute to other schools – moving schools is itself traumatic. There is too much delay in decisions about school relocations and too much uncertainty leaving parents and teachers feeling helpless/disempowered. So, we call for the following urgent actions:

- Where schools are still being used as camps prioritize construction of temporary shelters for these displaced people so that the school can be a school.
- Where schools are destroyed, badly damaged or within 100 metres of the shoreline, local parents and teachers must be empowered to identify a safe location for a temporary school, as close as possible to the original, using local materials or tents and with a clearly demarcated boundary so children are safe and can concentrate without disturbances.
- Resources that have been promised such as uniforms, text-books and equipment must be delivered within two weeks.
- The temporary schools should be priority locations for clean water and sanitation facilities.
- Locally-sourced and prepared mid-day meals should be available to all.
- Psycho-social training should be given to all teachers as soon as possible and they should receive emotional support themselves.
- Children should be actively involved themselves in making their temporary schools into clean, safe and friendly spaces.
- The government should confirm a delay in public examination and promote the exchange of notes between students as has been already proposed.

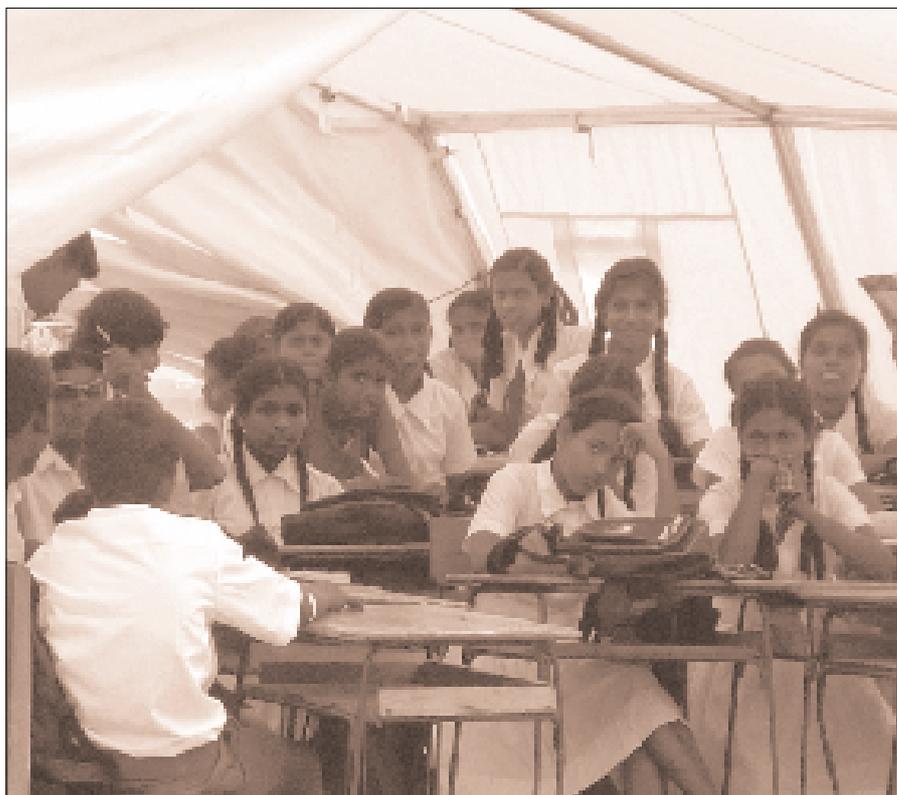
### Long Term Actions

The funding mobilized for education after the Tsunami should enable us to build world class quality education in affected areas. We call on the government to commit itself to:

- Active parental involvement in decisions about any re-location of schools. This should be systematic and sustained participation of all parents and the starting point should be to minimize the distance that schools are moved. The location of a school is a highly sensitive issue and parental confidence is crucial. Schools should not be fused with others/closed down.
- This opportunity must be taken to overcome the shortage of fully trained professional teachers.
- Schools should be built to the highest standards, safe from all future disasters (Tsunami, cyclone, earthquakes, conflicts and fire) and should be light, airy, with ample flexible spaces, sound-proofed walls and infrastructure for information technology.
- Disaster preparedness, environmental sustainability and social cohesion should be systematically integrated into the curriculum and teacher training.
- Children's rights should be integrated into every aspect of school life. Schools should be free of violence, discrimination and prejudice and must become child-friendly in all respects.
- Schools must become fully inclusive of all disabled children.
- Branding of schools should not be permitted, whether by donors, NGOs or corporations. All the schools must be government schools without any element of privatization.

All the organisations that signed this statement committed themselves to working actively at a grassroots level with parents, teachers and children across the country to translate this urgent call for action (and long term vision) on education into reality.

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#### **ActionAid itself prioritized four areas of work**

1. **Training community cadres/resource people** – emphasizing the short and long term effects of tsunami on the education of their children and enabling them to actively mobilise communities to formulate plans on education.
2. **Organising child-focused activities** – to help in overcoming trauma. This included stress-relieving measures such as sports, and cultural activities, incorporating physical/ mental/ aesthetic activities. Using the child-to-child approach we encouraged each child to help one other child to return to school.
3. **Helping with curriculum development at national level** – looking at what new subjects/ materials can help improve school safety/disaster preparedness as well as helping people deal with the effects of the tsunami – and supporting the development of relevant materials.
4. **Developing 'Dream Schools'** – involving affected people in developing their plans for future schools which reflect all their aspirations/dreams as well as being fully disaster-prepared (not only in their physical environment, infrastructure, and equipment but also in a psychological/social climate).

Many challenges remain but ActionAid is committed to working with others in Sri Lanka to make sure that the government is able to provide quality education for all children. We are also keen to draw out learning from these experiences to inform future work, most immediately in responding to the earthquake in Pakistan and India. But it is not enough only to respond to disasters. We need to invest much more in prevention, reducing the risks of disasters. Education can play a crucial role in this as the next article documents.

## Disaster risk reduction through schools

We have increasingly seen that education plays a key role in responding to disasters, whether after the Asian tsunami or the earthquake in Pakistan and India. But we are also keen to increase our work in looking at the role of schools in reducing the risk of disasters. We are thankful therefore to DFID who have recently approved a £2.8 million proposal from ActionAid to work on disaster risk reduction through schools in seven countries. The purpose of the project is to make schools in high-risk disaster areas safer, enabling them to act as a locus for disaster risk reduction, institutionalizing implementation of the Hyogo Framework within education systems.

The Hyogo framework emerged from a global conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Kobe earlier this year. It seeks to ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority through using both national platforms and community participation. It refers to the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in education, but there are few examples of how to do this effectively in practice within the education sector at both local and national levels. This project aims to fill the gap.

### The context

Media images capture the immediate effects of the constant cycle of floods and droughts, of hurricanes and earthquakes, of volcanic eruptions or pest attacks but tend to ignore the larger, less visible effects on people's health and livelihoods, and the social disruption which are now acknowledged to create permanent poverty traps and act as a drag on economic development. Climate change could add to existing disaster burdens by causing extreme climatic events to become more frequent and intense in the coming years – as well as producing new risks. The impact of disasters is profound on everyone, but is felt most deeply by poor people who are often least able to prepare and least able to recover. In some countries, early warning systems help some sectors of the population but everyone should have the opportunity to reduce the risk of disasters and to mitigate the effects. If this is not achieved, then the present impact of disasters on food security, basic livelihoods and human security may become even more severe in the future.

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The biggest challenge is to be pro-active. It is hard to universalise and institutionalise preparedness for disasters when, though often recurrent, disasters may only occur occasionally. Linking to schools presents a unique opportunity – as even in the poorest countries, schools are the most omnipresent institutions of the State. By working with schools, each new generation can be made better prepared.

### The role of schools

Schools play a critical role during and after disasters in many contexts. They are often havens for whole communities during disasters; a part of people's coping strategies. But few schools are well prepared to play this role. This project will help schools prepare so that they will be safe havens and be able to re-open more quickly after a disaster. This can be crucial as the functioning of a school has a powerful normalizing and stabilizing effect, both on children and on wider communities. The project will build understanding

**Schools are often havens for whole communities during disasters; a part of people's coping strategies.**

among teachers of how to identify and deal with distress and trauma caused by disasters. This project will also enable schools to make changes to the fabric of the school, to make it physically safer.

This project will also increase the level of awareness of risk in schools, building knowledge among teachers, parents and children. Information on hazards, mitigation measures, nutrition and preparedness plans will be shared, both in the classroom and out. Use of participatory approaches will allow information to be locally appropriate. The project will expand the role that schools play in helping communities assess and adapt to climate change, tracking trends and balancing the knowledge of elders with new evidence.

The project will be implemented in seven countries: Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Malawi, Ghana and Haiti. A distinctive approach, adapting 'Participatory Vulnerability Analysis' (PVA) for use in schools will be a defining feature of the project, helping to build the awareness and analysis of children, parents, teachers, district officials and agency staff around disaster risk reduction.

### Practical Engagement Locally

In each country particular districts have been identified that are at high risk of recurrent natural disasters. Within these districts, particular schools have been identified where intensive work will be done with children, teachers, parents and the wider community. The project will use participatory vulnerability analysis and other approaches for analysis of trends, awareness raising, attitudinal change and tracking in respect of risk reduction and preparedness, climate change and environment focused activities. There will be specific capacity building work with Parent-Teacher Associations and School Management Committees. Various approaches will be used to link the school and the wider community, including child-to-child and child-to-parent methodologies to communicate what to do in emergencies and how to reduce risks.

Support will be provided for community mobilization and advocacy as needed to enable the community to be safer and better prepared (including addressing safety for children not in school). All this work will be rigorously documented – both in respect of processes and outcomes, with a particular use of case studies. Some capital investments will be supported within the selected schools. This investment will enable schools to make changes to the fabric of the school to make it physically safer or able to play a more active normalizing function during and after disasters. Changes will be limited to things that can be affordably replicated by governments. If major changes are required the project will help schools raise adequate funding.

Building on the foundation of intensive work in particular schools, further work will be done with relevant agencies at district level with a view to influencing all schools in the district. This will start with PVA at district level. Learning will be consolidated and shared across schools to define best practice. Courses will be developed for wider in-service training of teachers within the

**Networking and advocacy work will be undertaken to change national education policies and practices based on consolidated learning from the local work. This may include developing new teaching-learning materials and other information materials/resources; reviewing and reforming the curriculum to insert disaster risk reduction in relevant places and popularizing the methodologies and processes used at local levels.**

district and disaster risk action plans will be developed to help all local schools reduce risks, raise awareness and deal with the consequences of disasters. Follow-up workshops will be held with

local government, education officials and leaders to define wider changes to policy and practice. Resource materials will be developed and distributed.

#### **Influencing Policies and Practices**

Networking and advocacy work will be undertaken to change national education policies and practices based on consolidated learning from the local work. This may include developing new teaching-learning materials/resources; reviewing and reforming the curriculum to insert disaster risk reduction in relevant places and popularizing the methodologies and processes used at local levels. This work will be led particularly by national education coalitions bringing together different agencies from across civil society so that, together with governments, they can draw out policy implications and issues for national level reform (e.g. from school-building policies to curriculum issues/training). There will also be some wider work on training and sensitizing based on the Hyogo Framework and the local projects.



Jenny Matthews/ ActionAid

Links will be made between the national education coalitions and national platforms taking forward the Hyogo Framework.

Learning will be drawn out and compiled from the seven different countries in order to influence programme design and policies internationally – both in the education sector and in other sectors. Two conferences will be organized (in Africa and Asia) to share learning from the project. Active engagement with help from the Institute of Development Studies (and through ActionAid’s membership on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction) will seek to inform and influence the policies and practices of relevant UN agencies, inter-governmental bodies and international NGOs. Because much natural disaster risk reduction can be seen as adaptation to climate change, the project will pay particular attention to linking knowledge and practitioner level expertise with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

#### **The importance of diversity**

Whilst most of these core activities will be shared across countries there will of course be some considerable diversity in different countries. Some may emphasise children and teachers tracking weather patterns and building up local data over time on climate variability and change. Some will focus on preparedness whilst others will also consider post-disaster recovery. There will be differences that arise owing to the different context and/or disasters faced – for example drought in Kenya, plagues of pests in Ghana, floods in Malawi and Haiti, earthquakes in Bangladesh, landslides in Nepal, coastal erosion in India. Many of the selected districts are prone to several types of disasters, adding to the complexity. One of the strengths of the project is allowing communities through PVA to order and voice their own sense of priorities among the list of vulnerabilities.

Whilst all the projects will share a core basic model there will also

be considerable diversity in approach or emphasis arising from the existing experiences and competencies of the partners involved in each district/ country. For example, in Nepal, children’s clubs in schools will be a key means for introducing disaster risk reduction – and reaching the youth in communities is seen as key. In Bangladesh there are plans to develop a specific code of conduct around education delivery in the context of disasters. In India, ‘emergency response teams’ will be formed and trained to help schools recognise, respond and recover from a disaster. A particular focus will be placed on psycho-social counselling in schools with training modules developed for teachers, children and community members. In Malawi there is particular

countries include: constructing water pans or rain catchment structures including guttering or water tanks; digging drainage ditches around schools; establishing school gardens for drought-resistant crops; putting in solid shutters on windows; fitting alarms, emergency bells, fire extinguishers and smoke alarms; crop diversification; seed storage systems; investing in computers/internet to link to meteorological news; building extra latrines (for use if schools take on shelter roles); investing in comprehensive first aid kits; developing earthquake-safe zones; repairing roofs; tree planting to limit flooding/landslides; extending capacity/opening times for schools and creating seasonal nurseries for pre-school children.

**Two conferences will be organized (in Africa and Asia) to share learning from the project. Active engagement with help from the Institute of Development Studies (and through ActionAid’s membership on the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction) will seek to inform and influence the policies and practices of relevant UN agencies, inter-governmental bodies and international NGOs.**

interest in how schools can help communities protect their basic livelihoods in the context of disasters. Haiti sees important roles for schools to be involved in budget tracking work in the context of disasters. Meanwhile Kenya is committed to working on disaster preparedness with a child-rights perspective and Ghana will seek to directly link the Ghana Fire Service and National Disaster Management Organisation into schools.

The nature of the capital investment supported will also vary enormously depending on the type of disaster being faced and the solutions identified by the children, parents and teachers as most practical and replicable in each location. The precise works cannot be defined in advance as they will emerge from PVA processes but the range of ideas identified in different

The key is that all of these will be identified by local people on the basis of systematic local analysis and discussion (involving children, parents, teachers) and all will be implemented with very modest budgets (so they can be replicable). Where larger structural change is required, the focus will be on helping people identify possible funding sources to do the work – and in the meantime influencing the design of future schools so that key measures can be fitted as standard.

For further information about this new initiative please contact  
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# Accountability, Mobilization and Transformation in Education

## Developing Resource Materials Together

by Simeon Ogbonna

With the support of the Banyan Tree Foundation, ActionAid International is in the process of developing some practical resource materials on issues of accountability, mobilisation and transformation in education. These are being developed collaboratively, based on practical experiences from around the world. In the past year, 13 countries have submitted case studies. Simeon Ogbonna in Nigeria is developing these into resource materials to be piloted by ActionAid programmes and partners. Here we provide a flavour of some of the materials that have been collated to date.

not only required all targeted pupils to pay exorbitant fees, it also imposed high fees on girls in boarding schools. Civil society found this unacceptable, mobilised and got the fees cancelled.

A national accountability case study from Kenya shows how the Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC) undertook a series of activities to help people understand what is involved in analysing and influencing education budgets. One of the activities was a research project, the result of which showed



Jess Hurd/ ReportDigital/ ActionAid

### Accountability

An NGO supported by ActionAid in Malawi, trained members of the School Management Committee (SMC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and community how to monitor the utilization of school resources. This helped to reduce the misuse and misappropriation of school materials.

From Ethiopia came a case study on the establishment of student councils, which has become an important feature of primary and secondary schools in the country. The case study documents the process of setting up a student council through democratic

elections. An election committee, whose membership includes SMC, PTA members and homeroom teachers, conducts the elections. Student councils have been active in maintaining cordial student-student, student-teacher and school-community relations.

In another case study from Nigeria, a coalition of civil society organizations, CSAEFA, successfully got a state government to cancel a regime of fees it had imposed on children whose parents were from outside (so called 'non indigenes') the state. The policy, which was announced by the state government,

that communities were carrying a lot of the burden of the education of their children in primary schools.

Another national-level case study from Malawi revealed how the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE), serves as a strong voice for pushing civil society agendas with the national government. For example, during the National Education Conference held in April 2005, CSCQBE successfully managed to convince the conference to extend recommendations by the Joint Education Sector Review from the original 12 to 18.

## Transformation

A case study from Bangladesh shows how the Commonwealth Education Fund supported seven partner organisations to work with communities for quality improvement in their local schools. This was done through a community visit programme in which SMC/PTA members visited one of the country's best schools so they could learn what the school/community did to bring their school to that level. Thereafter they shared ideas and

**With the support of the Banyan Tree Foundation, ActionAid International is in the process of developing some practical resource materials on issues of accountability, mobilisation and transformation in education. These are being developed collaboratively, based on practical experiences from around the world.**

experiences with the wider community and mapped strategies for improving the quality of their own school.

Another case study from Ghana reveals how the rural education volunteer scheme was evolved to redress teacher shortages in rural primary schools. This scheme targets youth who live in the school community, have finished senior secondary school, and are willing to teach in their communities for a period of three years.

In another case study from Ethiopia, learning beyond the classroom in schools was depicted as a way of integrating theory with practice by ensuring students fit into their communities and prepare for the world of work. This was realized through extra-curricular activities that were organized for students.

On national transformation, ActionAid Mozambique documented how an NGO influenced changes in the curriculum and methodology for training primary school teachers to equip them with life skills that would enable them to work effectively in rural public primary schools.

From Guatemala, we got a case study on how the Association of Mayan Education Centres undertook a project to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness in the curricula of Mayan secondary schools.

## Mobilisation

A case study from The Gambia shows how mothers were mobilised to enhance the participation of girls in education through the formation of mothers' clubs.

Another case study from Nigeria shows how ActionAid facilitated the formation of a coalition among many CSOs working in education. This has helped the myriad of CSOs to speak with one voice for maximum reach and impact.

Finally, ActionAid Guatemala sent in case study on mobilising with parliamentarians. The case study gave a clear picture of how civil society, including school children, can be mobilised to engage with those who represent them in the parliament for positive action towards the achievement of Education For All.

## Next Steps

We are still looking for more case studies to help us illustrate ways of addressing accountability, mobilisation or transformation in education at local or national levels. Do you have innovative work that you would like to share with us for inclusion in these resource materials? Or would you be interested in testing out the draft resource materials that are produce?

If so then please contact Simeon: [simeon.ogbonna@actionaid.org](mailto:simeon.ogbonna@actionaid.org)

## Update on HIV/AIDS and Education

2005 has been a pivotal year for ActionAid's work on HIV/AIDS and education. Within the Global Campaign for Education, Tania Boler has been developing her role as HIV/AIDS focal person, representing the campaign at both the UNAIDS inter-agency task team on HIV/AIDS and education, as well as the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS.

Key publications and events in 2005 have included:

- 18 country study on educational responses to HIV/AIDS. The report – entitled *Deadly Inertia* – published in November by the Global Campaign for Education (see article on page 38).
- Global Readiness report on Ministry of Education responses to the epidemic. To be published by multiple UN agencies, bilaterals and ActionAid.
- Publication of a joint report with Peter Aggleton (Institute of Education) that challenges some of the assumptions underlying life skills education for HIV prevention (see article on page 36).
- ActionAid continues to chair the UK working group on Education and HIV/AIDS. Topics under discussion in 2005 included peer education and abstinence-only education. Both these issues will be developed into working papers.
- ActionAid is partnering with the U.N / World Bank accelerate programme in order to build the capacity of Ministries of Education to strengthen the educational response to HIV/AIDS.
- A mapping exercise of peer education programmes is being conducted in over 20 countries.

For more details on any of the above, please contact Tania Boler (Senior Education and HIV/AIDS adviser): [tania.boler@actionaid.org](mailto:tania.boler@actionaid.org)

# Five fundamental obstacles to life skills education for HIV prevention

by Tania Boler and Peter Aggleton

This is an extract from a paper developed by the UK Working Group on Education and HIV/AIDS. Over the last decade, there has been increased support for the teaching of life skills<sup>1</sup> to young people, partly due to the perceived limitations of information-based HIV/AIDS education. However, to date, implementing life skills education in schools has proved to be problematic, especially in circumstances where approaches to teaching are very formal. This article briefly examines the five fundamental challenges that have arisen in terms of implementation, pedagogy and relevance.

## 1. Rational individuals?

In the two decades since HIV/AIDS was first identified, some very distinct schools of thought have emerged in the area of sexuality and relationships. Academics who focus on the national control an individual has over his or her actions in this camp are sometimes known as rationalists, or bounded rationalists. Those opposed to the idea of such self-determination are often called structuralists. In their view human action is influenced more by underlying economic, social, and cultural structures. In reality, most academics are not as extreme as this dichotomy suggests, but tend to lean strongly towards one camp or the other.

To date, most HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, including life skills, have been conceptualised within a rationalist framework. The assumption underlying much life skills education is that a person is somehow lacking in certain skills (for example, assertiveness) which, if taught and learned, they would be able to apply in different situations, thereby reducing their risk of HIV infection. For life skills to be effective it is also assumed that an individual will be able to act upon the skills they have learned, something that structuralists argue is often not the case.

Life skills assume that individuals have rational control over their actions. However, evidence clearly suggests that young people live within a complex web of social and cultural interactions, which frame their decisions and actions. Political, economic and cultural constraints mitigate against the success of HIV/AIDS prevention

**Although the arguments for why life skills are needed are fairly well-defined, there is less clarity on what the desired life skills are, and how they can be attained. It is important to identify the easiest and best ways of attaining them, and the pedagogical implications of a strong emphasis in teaching life skills in schools, teachers and teacher education.**

efforts. By focussing on the individual, life skills approaches tend to downplay the significance of these constraints.

The rationalist framework is also individualistic, assuming that individuals have the freedom to learn and act, to become self-autonomous and self-empowered, and to have 'agency' over their own actions. While such a view may fit the nature of some western societies, in which the idea of an individual being in control of his or her actions tends to dominate, this is not the case in other countries. Instead, collectivism and solidarity are the norm, and the individual's self-identity is very much incorporated within that of the group, be it family, village, community, etc. Thus, as the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire highlighted, attempts to empower the individual should be

accompanied by social solidarity and collective empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Lack of pedagogy

Although life skills education is based within the rationalist framework for understanding human behaviour, for the approach to work it must also be grounded within a clear and coherent theory of how education can be used to bring about change. In other words, there must be a clear methodology or pedagogy that frames the development (or improvement) of life skills as an educational process.

In the early 1990s, when it became apparent that many young people (and adults) were not going to change their sexual behaviour merely because they were told that they should, the international development community – particularly UNICEF – rallied around the idea of teaching life skills as part of HIV/AIDS education. Not only would these life skills allow young people to act upon their knowledge, it was also an apparently innocuous intervention which did not explicitly discuss sex and sexuality directly, thereby reducing potential conflict from the sexually conservative factions which are prominent in many high-prevalence countries.

However, in an attempt to make life skills acceptable to governments and communities, the term began to encompass an ever-increasing level of generic skills, leading to the claim that skills as diverse and complex as communicating, listening carefully, income-generating or empathy-building would reduce HIV infection.

Given the ambiguity over what life skills education consists of, it is hardly surprising that the pedagogical base is weak. Although the arguments for why life skills are needed are fairly well-defined, there is less clarity on what the desired life skills are, and how they can be attained. It is important to identify the easiest and best ways of attaining them, and the pedagogical implications of a strong emphasis on teaching life skills in schools, teachers and teacher education.

It is recommended that no attempts are made to include life

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, for the purposes of this paper, life skills refer to life skills for HIV/AIDS prevention.

<sup>2</sup> See Freire's work on agency and transformation, e.g. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* or *Pedagogy of Hope*.

skills into schools until such pedagogy is in place. In reality, the push for life skills education has raced ahead of conceptual clarity, leading to a situation in which the phrase has come to mean nearly all skills-based education, all participatory approaches, and all skills – however indirectly they may be related to HIV/AIDS vulnerability.

### 3. The reality of the classroom

A fundamental problem with introducing life skills education into schools derives from the difficulties of trying to introduce a certain educational approach into a pre-existing system which is often not conducive to such an approach. Teaching in most classrooms around the world is didactic, non-participatory, inflexible and assessment-driven. In contrast, life skills education is intended to be participatory and responsive, raising questions rather than providing clear-cut answers, and challenging young people and adults to find new ways of relating to one another.

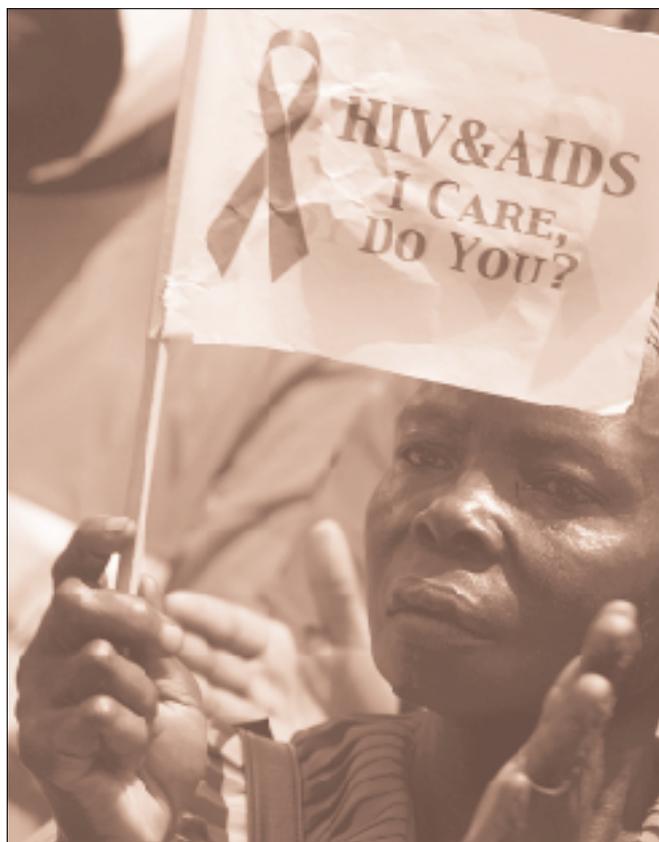
To date, not enough thought has gone into how to bridge the gulf between these two different educational processes. Indeed, it is often assumed that teachers will just be able to teach a radically different curriculum in life skills, with a minimal package of in-service training, often delivered through a ‘cascade’ approach. Expecting teachers to adapt to a different type of teaching, still within the confines of a classroom, is unrealistic, especially given the ever present pressures on teachers and the curriculum.

### 4. Donor-driven curriculum

Because life skills education has generally been donor-driven, it has been largely imposed upon schools from the outside. As a consequence, the life skills curriculum is often not

put through the general curriculum planning and review process, and instead is simply ‘bolted on’ to the main curriculum. The problem here is that school curricula need to be reviewed and adapted holistically, otherwise they become overburdened (as is the case in many countries), reducing the potential benefits of any HIV/AIDS education.

Moreover, if the introduction of the life skills curriculum is viewed as a separate process from that adopted for wider curriculum development, there is likely to be less sense of ownership by curriculum developers and teachers.



Jess Hurd/ReportDigital/ ActionAid

To compound these problems, formal education is increasingly assessment-driven, while life skills cannot usually be assessed. Indeed, given the participatory aims, formalising the approach through assessment may give excessive structure to something that should be flexible.

Possibly as a result of these multiple problems, life skills are often given a marginal role within the curriculum, and left to extra-curricular activities such as ‘anti-AIDS clubs’ which, although perhaps more conducive to

participatory methodologies, are limited in scope. These are also likely to be non-compulsory and will have a reduced coverage.

### 5. A wider crisis in education

Other elements of the formal education system make the introduction of life skills education problematic. First, many schools are distinctly ‘unhealthy’ – they may be physically in poor shape, with poor sanitation; they may be environments in which the opinions of young people are not respected or taken seriously; and they may be places that tolerate or even encourage sexual harassment. Such conditions are not conducive to the introduction of a participatory approach, which assumes child-centred learning and positive role models. More effort needs to go into planning how life skills can be introduced to schools when the learning environment operates within a different regime of teaching and thinking.

At the same time as advocating more additions to the curriculum, international pressure led many governments in the 1980s to cut public spending, undermining the ability of the education system to implement life skills effectively. Classes are often too large, and schools are under-resourced. This wider crisis in education has rendered many teachers unmotivated and unable to cope.

Furthermore, there is a crisis among teachers, who are often under-paid, over-worked and under-trained. Teachers require a distinct type of training to teach life skills – yet pre-service and in-service teacher training in many poor countries is vastly inadequate, producing a weak platform upon which to introduce specialist life skills training and support.

### Key Recommendations:

- There must be clearer definitions of life skills and what is needed in the curriculum, to reduce confusion in understanding.
- A clearly defined pedagogical framework should be the starting point of any educational process. It is important to clarify which skills should be taught in life skills, why these skills are chosen, and how they should be taught.
- Life skills approaches need to be more educationally driven, building upon evidence regarding which educational processes have transformative capacity.
- The suitability of an individualistic approach needs to be assessed in contexts where a spirit of collectivism prevails.
- More effort needs to be placed on introducing a participatory approach into a non-participatory system. There is a need for research to look at the circumstances under which life skills can be suitably adapted to the formal education system.
- Whole-school approaches are needed, which take into account the reality of the school. From this vantage point, life skills can be introduced.
- Life skills curricula should be developed and reviewed as part of a wider curriculum reform.
- Life skills require highly skilled and motivated staff with in-depth understanding of issues. A massive injection of resources is needed to train teachers to deliver life skills and to support them in their work.
- For life skills curricula to succeed, the wider crisis in formal education must also be addressed.

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For full copies of this and other related reports on HIV and education:

[http://www.aidsconsortium.org.uk/Education/Education%20downloads/life\\_skills\\_new\\_small\\_version.pdf](http://www.aidsconsortium.org.uk/Education/Education%20downloads/life_skills_new_small_version.pdf)

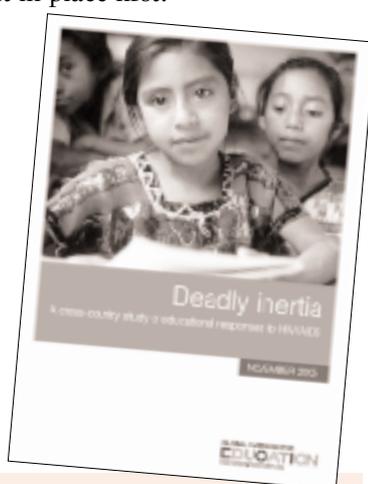
### NEW PUBLICATION: **Deadly Inertia: a cross country study of educational responses to HIV/AIDS**

*Publisher:* Global Campaign for Education

*Authors:* Tania Boler and Anne Jellema

This report charts the educational responses to HIV and AIDS in 18 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. In 2004, education coalitions and HIV/AIDS coalitions came together to discuss their Ministry of Education's responses, as well as their own. Although varied, certain conclusions resonate across all the countries:

- Governments are turning a blind eye to the educational needs of orphans and HIV positive students.
- Insufficient action is being taken to prevent the potential impact of HIV/AIDS on teachers.
- Donor funding is being directed towards a series of stand-alone initiatives that enjoy little ownership by government.
- Too much government and donor money is being spent on poorly designed interventions that go unimplemented because the most basic foundations – resources, ownership, training, even basic data – have not been put in place first.



You can download copies of the report on [www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org). For hard copies, please contact Tania Boler: [tania.boler@actionaid.org](mailto:tania.boler@actionaid.org)

### **STAR: Empowering communities to respond to HIV/AIDS**

by Tom Muzoora

Despite many efforts to respond to HIV/AIDS, sub-Saharan Africa is still being devastated by the pandemic. There have been mass awareness campaigns, counselling and testing programmes, projects to overcome stigma and discrimination and initiatives linking prevention to care, but the virus still seems to race head of attempts to prevent or treat it.

One problem is that responses are often partial or sectoral, cut off from one another. There are few attempts that are truly comprehensive or joined up.

It is in this context that practitioners from two distinct participatory traditions have come together in recent years. *Reflect* has established itself as the most widely used participatory approach to adult learning – winning the UN International Literacy Prize in 2003 and now used in over 70 countries. *Stepping Stones* is an approach to HIV/AIDS prevention that started in Uganda and has spread globally. Leading practitioners of the two approaches have met occasionally since 2000 but it was not until 2004 that they hatched a real merger – to respond more comprehensively to the pandemic. *STAR: Empowering communities in the face of HIV* is the product of the merger.

STAR combines the best of the *Stepping Stones* and *Reflect* approaches to enable communities to analyse and tackle all the issues that affect them, considering how HIV/AIDS impacts on every aspect of their lives, whether on family life, community affairs, livelihoods or culture. It addresses themes ranging from basic agriculture to the impact of war in the context of HIV. It draws together all the relevant participatory tools from both approaches to facilitate an exploration of how these issues link with HIV/AIDS and how to take effective action to improve or solve

them.

Comic Relief is funding a STAR action research project pilot in Mozambique, Uganda and Nigeria to rigorously test and document the approach. Meanwhile the European Commission is funding a much wider project in seven countries; Uganda, Mozambique, Nigeria, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, and Bangladesh – with plans to extend to another 21 countries. Whereas the European Commission funded STAR project is still in its infancy, the Comic Relief-funded action research pilots started in October 2004, and have now moved a year through implementation. This has not been an easy journey but some of the outcomes are now becoming clear as the different countries adapt STAR in different ways to different contexts.

For example, in Mozambique teachers and parents, following their engagement in extended reflection and action processes, are breaking the silence around HIV/AIDS in schools and neighbouring communities.

In Uganda, through STAR activities in 26 women's groups, the Ongino Women's Initiative has influenced local government provision of voluntary counselling and testing services, free condom distribution and delivery of district-based HIV/AIDS education from government doctors and primary health educators. In Bundibugyo District, women living with HIV/AIDS have used drama to create openness and positive living among communities. They have worked with churches, mosques and schools, and in public gatherings such as wedding ceremonies, funerals, or on child-vaccination



David San Millán/ActionAid

days where women gather once every month.

Nigeria on the other hand is promoting action learning among youth groups, focusing on youth-to-youth processes and strengthening both youth to parent dialogue and dialogue between the sexes. Through STAR activities in Cross River state, Nigeria

Youth AIDS Programme have managed to secure local government support to conduct similar initiatives to involve all the 18 autonomous communities of Ikom Local Governance Area. The Centre for Peace and Rural Development has also created awareness of HIV/AIDS and through community-based dialogue and discussion groups are actively challenging denial, stigma and discrimination as a result of religious and other traditional practices and beliefs.

We are learning one basic fact: that any effective and comprehensive response against HIV/AIDS and its effects requires a sustained community response aiming at empowering the grassroots to take leadership and challenge the current state-of-affairs. The virus will only be addressed effectively when we mobilize energy and awareness at the grassroots and engage people in a sustained process which touches on every aspect of the impact of HIV/AIDS, from technical to personal, from policy to practice. STAR is an approach with immense potential which we need to continually enrich and learn from.

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## Sudanese women win UN literacy prize for *Reflect*

Following the success of the International *Reflect* Circle (CIRAC) in 2003 in winning the United Nations International Literacy Prize, in 2005, a *Reflect* programme with internally displaced Sudanese women has won the same prize. The programme, run by GOAL Ireland has already had a significant impact around Khartoum and has attracted much wider interest. Below is a summary of the programme as presented to the judges at the United Nations.

In 1992 the Government of Sudan initiated a plan of action for a National Literacy Campaign with the aim of eradicating illiteracy among 7.9 million youth and adults. With this objective in mind, the Irish-based NGO GOAL implemented adult literacy programmes in internally displaced people's camps in Khartoum using conventional adult literacy approaches. However, results were mixed. Following field observation and extensive discussions about the *Reflect* approach, Sudan's educational authorities made a national declaration proposing the use of *Reflect* as an appropriate alternative to conventional adult literacy approaches. GOAL therefore started a programme in close co-ordination with Sudan's National Council for Literacy and Adult Education, the body responsible for the technical aspects of the National Literacy Campaign. In May 1999, the GOAL *Reflect* approach was specifically approved as an appropriate adult literacy approach for internally displaced peoples by the national adult literacy authorities.

**The programme has been based on the well-proven assumption that development is intrinsically linked to literacy.**

The programme has been based on the well-proven assumption that development is intrinsically linked to literacy. The high illiteracy rates among women in Dar El Salaam (63%) and Soba Aradi (85%) are seen as the chief obstacle hindering socio-economic advancement. An estimated 69% of the population survive on an income well below the poverty line, further adding to the social isolation of women. The use of the *Reflect* approach has been the core of the programme and has proved a versatile and creative way of providing women with opportunities for empowerment, economic improvement and increased family welfare. The aim is to allow women greater participation in equitable development through the acquisition of literacy. The programme has targeted over 2,500 war-displaced illiterate women in the Khartoum area over five years.

The programme had no textbooks. Instead a locally-devised manual for the literacy facilitators was used as a teaching guide and basis for discussions. The manual comprises units relevant to the needs and interests of the women and is based on outcomes from a socio-economic and socio-cultural survey carried out in the local areas. Each unit deals with a specific subject related to community life and starts with the construction of a pictorial representation such as a map, matrix, calendar or diagram, reflecting for example, income levels or household distribution. The graphics are used to stimulate discussion, participant-generated writing, related numeracy work and actions to address local problems. This is an empowering process that creates a democratic space where negative cultural norms and power relations can be challenged to give women a louder voice.

The programme has four female Sudanese GOAL staff managing activities with the support of a programme coordinator. Between them they share expertise in

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income generation training and activities, *Reflect* training-of-trainers and project management. The programme also incorporates 100 local volunteers as facilitators and supervisors. Facilitators and participants have mobilized their communities on a number of issues, including HIV/AIDS education, cleaning campaigns, health education and sanitation. Key to the success has been that the process is based on what the participants know, rather than

**The programme also incorporates 100 local volunteers as facilitators and supervisors. Facilitators and participants have mobilized their communities on a number of issues, including HIV/AIDS education, cleaning campaigns, health education and sanitation.**

what the facilitators knows.

Owing to the successful completion of the process by 2,000 participants, the literacy rate increased from 20% to 36% among the women in the age range 18–45 years old. Over 250 participants organized classes for higher formal education and 300 joined basic education government schools. 21 facilitators took up part time university studies.

The impact of *Reflect* at the community level was very positive. Individual interviews to representatives of local authorities reported that since *Reflect* circles started the whole community has been positively affected by its benefits. Groups identified problems and in some cases succeeded in taking actions including: basic maintenance of roads to facilitate daily traffic and movements; creation of local markets and small shops in isolated areas; establishment of new kindergartens where there weren't enough; and promotion of different campaigns on HIV and health. For bigger matters, they addressed the local council, obtaining services such as running water and power as well as better public transportation.

Sharing *Reflect* resources satisfies many other community needs. Rakubas (basic one-room buildings or structures) that are used for the circles are also used as meeting places, kindergartens and vaccination points, when not occupied by circles. Equally, when special activities (workshop, speeches on particular issues, etc) are organized by the circles, attendance is extended to all. Women's contribution to household income has increased as a result of income generating activities. The increase has a positive impact on spending on nutritious food and health. Women feel that they now have a voice and a sense of involvement in community-based organisations and in family decision-making. All in all, the women feel that the experience has had a notable positive impact on their knowledge, attitudes and skills.

## Promoting the rights of girls in school through a Girls Camp

by Julie Adu Gyamfi

ActionAid International Ghana collaborated with the Girls' Education Unit of the Ministry of Education and Sports to run a National Girls Camp from 30th August to 8th September 2005.



Stuart Freedman/Network/ActionAid

This year's camp brought together 95 girls selected from very remote areas of the Upper West, Upper East, Northern Greater, Brong Ahafo and Greater Accra regions of Ghana. The girls are selected based on their performance in school and the fact that they come from very poor homes. The camp serves as a form of incentive for them. Many of these girls have never travelled outside their village before, they have never sat in a car before and they have never shared their lives with other children. In many ways the experience is a first for them.

The 10 day camp, which is the fourth since 2000, seeks to give the girls unique opportunities to broaden their horizons as they interact with other women role models. It is hoped that this will help them to aspire to a life beyond the traditional roles that they are often bound to in their villages.

Activities planned for the girls include visits to education and health institutions as well as to local industries to understand different livelihoods. The girls are also taken through life skills that will help

them in their academic pursuits, outlook and behaviour. They are given specialised support for reading, have sessions on child rights and responsibilities, as well as sessions on sexual maturation, personal hygiene and HIV/AIDS. They also visit the centre of town to have first hand information on the hazardous lives of street children and porters.

After the camp some of the girls had this to say:

Evelyn Fofe: *"I have made new friends... and I have also learnt how to plan my time to study"*

Martina Odoi, 13 years said: *"I enjoyed the role model interaction so much, I admire them and I wish to be like one someday"*.

Many of the girls who participated in previous camps felt that the experience had encouraged them to make it into Senior Secondary schools. Our vision is that more girls will have such opportunities.



Stuart Freedman/Network/ActionAid

# Assembling Reflections

by Zaki Hasan

## Reflect convention in Bangladesh

*Reflect*, as a process of adult learning and collective analysis for social change and transformation, would be greatly intensified if the analysis carried out by the *Reflect* participants could go beyond the circle-boundary and be heard by a wider audience. One effort to achieve this is the annual *Reflect* convention that has been taking place in Bangladesh since 2003. The convention has established itself as a hub to link the reflections of participants, facilitators and trainers in a regular and systematic manner.

Since the first *Reflect* convention, the event has become more comprehensive, systematic and meaningful. More than 400 participants joined the convention in 2005 to share experiences of using the *Reflect* approach in establishing the rights of poor and marginalized people. ActionAid Bangladesh hosted the event while *Reflect* implementing organizations of Bangladesh and their national network (SPED – Society for participatory Education and Development) played significant roles in making the event a success. As well as ActionAid Bangladesh and its partners' staff, there were participants from other national and international development organizations, donor agencies, print and electronic media, educational institutions, and others. Participants from Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan made the convention an international space for reflection.

Mansoor Ahmed Chowdhury, Executive Director of Impact Foundation, in his opening speech said, "*Reflect is an effort to make an inclusive society where no one would be excluded*". Nasreen Huq, Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh, in her welcome-speech said, "*A special characteristic of this convention is that it allows practitioners, particularly those on the front-line, to come and exchange their learning, the challenges that they have faced through the year*".

The convention focused on the, following themes:

1. *Reflect* and disability
2. Self-help groups through *Reflect*
3. Stop violence against women through *Reflect*
4. Quality health and *Reflect*
5. Disaster preparedness and risk reduction through *Reflect*
6. *Reflect* and ICT (Information, Communication and Technology)
7. Literacy through *Reflect*
8. Promotion of agriculture-based livelihood through *Reflect*
9. HIV/AIDS and *Reflect*

**Since the first *Reflect* convention, the event has become more comprehensive, systematic and meaningful. More than 400 participants joined the convention in 2005 to share experiences of using the *Reflect* approach.**

As *Reflect* is about creating space for poor and marginalized people's voices, the convention's most memorable session was the one in which *Reflect* participants shared how they have been struggling to establish their rights through *Reflect*. For example, Monowara Begum commented, "*Nobody wanted me in their groups as I was disabled. But I wanted to show them my real ability. Then we formed our own group. I, Monowara Begum, without a leg, led the whole group*". Meanwhile, Alea Begum, a *Reflect* participant from a brothel, said, "*We are sex workers...no one gives importance, no one listens to us. Even when we visited banks, we weren't valued. Now we are. Most of the 400 girls here can now read and write*".

The crucial roles played by the

front-line *Reflect* circle facilitators and *Reflect* trainers were also celebrated. The 'Unique Contribution to *Reflect*' awards were started up, with 10 *Reflect* Circle Facilitators and 10 *Reflect* trainers given awards for their work.

I have had the privilege of attending all three conventions. The empowerment that I have felt during the convention could hardly be expressed in written form. The convention showed how social and poverty issues could become live and anyone whatever their language and academic background could understand the things that are being shared. The bonding that was created among the participants in the convention will surely last long.

Li Hong, a participant from China, wrote after the convention, "*I almost quit my membership and gave up my project before I came to the Dhaka Conference because of my tiredness, weakness and selfishness. I was changed and strengthened by your *Reflect* conference and your people, especially by my personal experiences with the local people and contact with children. I was touched deeply. I was pushed by *Reflect* and my life was affected by another life.*"

**The convention showed how social and poverty issues could become live and anyone whatever their language and academic background could understand the things that are being shared.**

For further information and to join *Reflect* Convention 2006 please contact Zaki Hasan:  
zaki.hasan@actionaid.org

## At last! A Reflect Asia Network!

*Reflect* has been practiced in Asia since its inception in 1993 but there has been a striking new momentum in the spread of the approach in the region in the past year. There are very diverse experiences across the continent and huge potential for exchange and learning that have not, to date, been fulfilled due to the absence of a *Reflect* network in Asia. There were some tentative attempts to form a network (e.g. a meeting in Bangkok in 2001, a workshop in China in 2004), which have kept some communication flowing, but the emergence of a real network has only now occurred following a regional meeting September in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The participating countries in the ‘*Reflect* Asia Network Meeting 2005’

were Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan. The participants at the meeting agreed that for the next year they would work to develop this network and to do so an ad-hoc core group has been formed. Zaki Hasan from Bangladesh will chair the group for the next year. A list of core group members is given in the table below.

During the meeting, a number of activities were identified that would be implemented in the following year. These include a regional *Reflect* training of trainers workshop, a newsletter, exposure/ exchange visit, engagement with the International Reflect Circle (CIRAC) and human resource sharing. ActionAid Bangladesh will be the

secretariat for the next year and Nasreen Huq, Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh, will be an advisor both to the Secretariat and the core group. For 2005, Ahmad Masoud of ActionAid Afghanistan has been elected as Asia representative on the CIRAC Coordination Team, joining the other member Shafiqul Islam from Bangladesh.

*Reflect* Asia Network Core-Group members are approaching various organizations and agencies for recognition as well as for financial and technical assistance.

For further information on the *Reflect* Asia Network please contact: [reflect.asia.network@gmail.com](mailto:reflect.asia.network@gmail.com)

List of core group (ad-hoc) members			
Country	Name of the member	Organization of the member	E-mail
Afghanistan	Javed Yousifi	ActionAid Afghanistan	javed@actionaidafg.org
	Brigitte Goby	ActionAid Afghanistan	brigitgoby@hotmail.com
Bangladesh	Masuda Faruk Ratna	GBSS	e-mail not working at the moment
	Zaki Hasan (Chairperson)	ActionAid Bangladesh	zaki.hasan@actionaid.org
Cambodia	Sokheng Hong	ActionAid Cambodia	sokheng@actionaidcambodia.org
	Sina Kou	Urban Poor Women Development	upwd@forum.org.kh
China	Li Hong	Yunnan Institute of Educational Science	kmlihong@hotmail.com
	TBA	–	–
India	Shantamay Chaaterjee	ActionAid India	shantamaychatterjee@hotmail.co
	Clara Minz	North Council for Disabled	clara_minz@hotmail.com
Nepal	TBA	–	–
	TBA	–	–
Pakistan	Talib Jan	ISWDO	talib_jan21cn@yahoo.com
	TBA	–	–

## Global Updates

### Convening our core education resource

by Balaraba Aliyu

#### Who we are:

During 2005 ActionAid has formed a new core International Education Team, based in multiple locations. The core team is made up of:

- *Thematic Head of Education* – David Archer, based in UK
- *Advocacy/Campaigns Coordinator* – Victorine Kemonou Djitrinou, South Africa
- *Senior Policy Analyst/Research Coordinator* – Akanksha Marphatia, UK
- *Programme and Shared Learning Coordinator* – Balaraba Aliyu, Nigeria
- *Senior Policy Analyst, HIV and Education* – Tania Boler, UK
- *Operations Coordinator* – Egigayehu Summers, UK

This group is give strategic support by an Education Working Group which includes:

- *Chair* – Charles Abani, Nairobi (*ActionAid representative on the board of the Global Campaign for Education*)
- Alexandre Arrais, Brazil (*key link to the Latin American Education Campaign*)
- Babu Matthews, India
- Louise Hilditch, Belgium

There are also named lead education resource people in 33 ActionAid country programmes across Africa, Asia and Latin America, each of whom dedicate part of their time to cross-country or international work. A full list of these people is available on request.

On top of this there are people working on specific projects or issues such as:

- *Documenting Accountability, Mobilisation and Transformation* – Simeon Ogbonna, Nigeria
- *EC Block Grant/Funding Coordinator* – Emma Pearce, UK
- *Linking US domestic and international actors on education* – to be recruited, US
- *Intern on constitutional rights* – Ben Spiers
- *Intern on HIV, peer education and abstinence* – Alice Woolnough

It also worth noting that the secretariat of the Commonwealth Education Fund also sits in ActionAid International’s UK office, coordinated by Chike Anyanwu, with Mark Oldaker, Jill Hart and Montse Pejuan. This team is accountable to an inter-agency management committee with ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children. Two Global Campaign for Education posts are also based in the UK office of ActionAid International: Lucia Fry, the Northern Policy Adviser and Lucy Tweedie, Global Action Week Coordinator.

The *Reflect* team led by Kate Newman, with Kate Metcalf, Hannah Beardon and Ravi SK, are now fully independent from the International Education Team but continue their important work with strong links to adult education. They are developing their own international team across ActionAid.

A priority for 2006 is the rebuilding of the Education Working Group as an effective and empowered advisory group with a role to facilitate political and strategic link across ActionAid.

## Meeting in Johannesburg

The core education constituency across ActionAid met in Johannesburg from 14th–17th May 2005 with representatives from 29 countries. The global headquarters of ActionAid International is now based here and this presented a great opportunity to make links with other key parts of the organisation. The convergence of such a wide education network for the first time allowed participants to establish strong horizontal links and define how to work thematically in the true spirit of internationalization. The meeting reviewed the draft international strategy on education (which has subsequently been approved by the ActionAid International Board of Trustees). The meeting was also a

good opportunity for shared learning as every participating country was able to showcase some of their innovative education work for the benefit of their colleagues.

Some examples of work shared include Pakistan showcasing the advocacy they are doing against school curricula that promote militarism. Nepal showcased the work they are doing to get access to schools for excluded groups. Liberia showcased work on increasing security in schools and enrolment in a post-conflict environment.

A review of the changing context of our work was done examining the wider global issues and trends followed by an internal review, which gave an historical perspective of ActionAid’s work in education since 1972.

Participants were then able to review the international education strategy, drawing out and discussing any controversial issues.



The central concerns were around how to shift towards a fully rights-based approach in all our work and how to introduce innovative approaches with government. Eventually the strategy was strongly endorsed by all participants. We also explored the possibilities for agency-wide campaigning on education as well as regional and national campaigning, particularly drawing on the extensive experience of Victorine, the Education Advocacy/Campaigns Coordinator.

Existing cross-country education work by ActionAid and allies was also shared, ranging from:

- the Commonwealth Education Fund;
- the Global Campaign for Education;
- macroeconomics and education (IMF and the challenge it presents to the achievement of MDGs);
- violence against girls in education;
- compiling learning on accountability, mobilization and transformation.

Key outcomes from the meeting were:

- collective ownership of an international education strategy;
- a better understanding of campaign strategies and identified regional campaign priorities;
- conceptual clarity around our work within the context of the rights-based approach;
- clarified roles and mandates of lead education people at country level and the core international education team, as well as a developed strategy for horizontal working;
- mapped out strategies for possible areas of joint work with the five other thematic priority areas of ActionAid (HIV/AIDS, women's rights, food rights, human security and governance);
- strategy mapped out for maintaining effective communication within the education network.

## Building education bridges across Asia

by Niraj Seth

The education lead persons from eight Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam) met for three days from 3rd–5th October 2005. This was the first time they met as a group. The meeting was organized to understand the country specific context and status of education; to see what learning can be derived across countries; to identify issues on which countries can work together; and to identify some tangible tasks on which collaborative work can be done. The following is a brief of some of the issues discussed in the meeting.

The history of colonial rule in the Asian countries brings us commonality, enabling us to identify with each other on education issues. Clearly there are variations but there are also strong binding elements. Sri Lanka and Vietnam are doing much better now than other countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Each country programme made a presentation on the state of education in their respective countries and highlighted some challenges faced. It is evident in all the countries that the desire for the universalisation of education is spreading and that there is a strong belief in education as a catalyst for social change.

**There is a general consensus that education should be given to people as a right. Some countries have already made it a right on paper but not in practice and others have not even made formal commitments on paper.**

In preparation for the meeting the education lead persons had discussions in their respective countries to formulate a charter of demands from the point of view of civil society. Reviewing these charters the most significant common issues concerned the Right to Education. There is a general consensus that education should be given to people as a right. Some countries have already made it a right on paper but not in practice

and others have not even made formal commitments on paper. There was much discussion about how to ensure the right to education is delivered, including through legal action and popular mobilisation.

Many other issues cut across countries such as making education free in real terms, inclusive education ensuring access of all children, participation of civil society in the planning process and adequate budgetary allocation for education. There were other important issues like violence in schools, teaching methodologies and the choice of language of instruction.

Each participant outlined the work of ActionAid in their respective programme. There were some strong common threads, notable in the uses of *Reflect* and work with budget analysis. There were also many areas that were identified where we could work collectively at the Asian regional level, for example:

- What is the possibility of education being secured as a right in all countries?
- What are our common positions on user fees? Up to which class do we want free and compulsory education? What is feasible?
- Budgetary allocation – how much budgetary allocation is required for the education sector? What demands should be raised with our respective governments?
- Content of education. Is it possible to ask for secular education to be imparted in all schools? Is it possible to have a regional initiative against fundamentalist education?
- Can we promote schools as zones of peace in the region?

The group decided to enhance their understanding on education-related issues. Although the contexts are different, concerns are common in all countries.

Some key outstanding issues for the future included:

- We need to have better articulation of privatisation of education
- The role of teachers' unions is important. We need to engage with these unions and raise political demands (e.g. EFA) and help them develop this demand by linking it with issues that are a priority for them e.g. no para teachers, salary.
- We should work towards developing better relations with non-Bretton Wood organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO.
- We should promote community participation in education through local self-governance spaces available in our countries.
- We should try and get the judiciary involved – try to promote cross border interactions among judges with a focus on education.
- We need to look at the international strategic goals of ActionAid on education and ensure our strategies and plans are harmonised.
- We should develop a status report on education for the region, do an empirical check on the government's claims perhaps on a sample basis.
- We should set up national working groups, which can collaborate on research etc.
- We need to build our understanding of the effect of neo liberal policies on education.
- We should consider collective campaigning on violence against girls as this poses a hurdle to access to education.



Jenny Matthews/ ActionAid

## News from India...

### Education working group in India

Recognising the need to work on advocacy of education-related issues with greater vigour, an education working group was formed by ActionAid India. Partners in each region are undertaking work on education independently but before now there have been limited opportunities for sharing about work. The group has one member from each of the 14 ActionAid regional offices in India and project partners working in the area of education. The members – about 20 of them – met for the first time in July this year. Colleagues had varied levels of experience in education. Therefore we decided to begin by orienting everyone on the key current issues. Experts were invited to share their views on the common school system, governance-related issues, legal aspects, the impact of globalisation and the national curriculum framework. This helped to build a common understanding. We also started to build some common



Asia working group in Delhi

positions on key issues. The participation of people from teachers' unions in this meeting was a key step towards a more lasting association with them. The group has decided to meet periodically to share, learn from each other and do collective planning.

### **UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability**

Many people will know that the United Nations is presently formulating a Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability. This is a key opportunity for NGOs but we found that no NGOs were part of the Indian delegation. ActionAid India took the initiative to form a study group comprising NGO representatives working on different forms of disability, lawyers, academics and other activists. Through discussions, the group members are trying to understand the process involved in the formulation of this Convention.

In its present form there are 34 articles in the Convention.

Article 24 focuses on education. It asks the state parties to ensure inclusive education at all levels. Persons with disability should not be excluded from the general education system on grounds of disability. Only in exceptional circumstances alternative support measures should be provided that are consistent with the overall goal of inclusion. Training to staff who work with them, use of appropriate language and mode of communication and provision of quality education are other areas that find mention in the article.

The group will now take a proactive role to meet with the government officials who are part of the official delegation to give their recommendations.

For more information on the Convention on Disability please see the UN website:  
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enabl e/rights/adhoccom.htm>

## **Remembering... Uma Pandey**

Uma Pandey an ActionAid colleague and leading *Reflect* activist, passed away on October 31st 2005. Here Ravi SK and her colleagues in India recall her unique contributions:



Uma's association with participation and rights action dates back to the early 1990s, when she, along with several youths from her region, formed the Himalayan Study Circle (HSC). Later, HSC became one of the first NGO partners of ActionAid India to work on the *Reflect* approach. Uma untiringly led the *Reflect* process and enabled the formation of 35 literacy focussed *Reflect* Circles. Even today, the *Reflect* circles that she helped form are source of learning and inspiration to practitioners across India.

In 2001, Uma volunteered to work with ActionAid India's Gujarat Earthquake relief and rehabilitation program in Bhuj. She played a key role in organising single women and widows in the earthquake-affected families under the banner of *Ekal Nari Sangathan* (single women's organisation). She lived and worked with the women survivors to rebuild their lives and livelihood.

Within a year she was compelled to relocate to Delhi, once she was diagnosed as having a brain tumour. Even while undergoing treatment she continued to work. She supported the making of a participatory video of homeless children entitled '*Patri pe Bachpan*'. Her last days were spent working for the Village Publishing Unit of Books for Change. She has written a number of booklets in local languages for community activists. She will be remembered by all, particularly the people of her state, for having led the women of Pithoragarh through the process of conscientisation.

Umaji – that's how people referred to her – adding the honorific term "Ji". She had a deep bonding with the Himalayan mountains, a love and respect for the ecology and environment, a belief in human rights, and a spiritual disposition to life. The *Reflect* circles Uma organized were known as *Jagaran*, meaning variously, Aware, Awake – Conscientise. They were focused on women's rights – a commitment she retained to her last days. She was helping set up a resource centre for women's rights, specifically to fight the deadly practice of female foeticide.

A heart as big as the Himalayas and perspectives about poverty as sharp as the cedar leaves – she was so natural and grounded in the Himalayas. In Uma's death ActionAid has lost an activist colleague, a friend and a visionary.

# Remembering... *Chinwuba Egbe and Justice Egware lost their lives in a plane crash from Lagos to Abuja on 22nd October 2005.*

## **Justice Egware 1969 – 2005**

Justice, a human rights lawyer, attained his law degree in 1996 from the Edo state university, and attended the Nigerian Law School in 1997. Justice also obtained a Masters Degree in Law in 2004.

Justice began his law career as the staff attorney and programme officer at the Justice Development and Peace Commission, Ijebu-Ode where he developed a passion for helping the poor and excluded. He worked with vulnerable groups, enabling them to access social services through the articulation of their needs to policy and law makers. From 1993 till 1999, he was with the Policy and Law Reform Centre in Edo State, where he worked with a specific focus on building capacity for rural communities to engage with policy

makers in demanding both social amenities and accountability from elected officers.

As coordinator and policy advisor of the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All from 2002, he facilitated the networking processes for over 219 civil society organisations working on education. He managed advocacy and campaign programmes as well as building capacity for member NGOs.

Justice was at the forefront of the fight against poverty and for education. He had successful engagements with the African Network Campaign on Education For All and the Global Campaign for Education. He was also made the national coordinator of the Global Call to Action against Poverty.



Justice was a people's lawyer and a defender of the poor and powerless. He offered his service to many people whose rights were violated because they were poor. His zest for life and passion for his work were infectious. He will be sorely missed as the bridge-builder and human rights activist that he was.

## **Chinwuba Egbe 1971 – 2005**

Chinwuba, affectionately known to his close friends as 'Bishop' was born on 1st October 1971. He earned a Diploma in Special Education and later on a degree in General and Applied Psychology from the University of Jos in Nigeria. Chinwuba began his career in development in an NGO called DELES where he was involved in the training of over 100 people in leadership and participatory education methods at the community level. Chinwuba was also at CBD-NGO forum as a project officer before joining ActionAid in 2002.

At AAIN, Chinwuba was the Acting Team Leader in Education, he was part of the team that pioneered

*Reflect* work in more than 30 communities and was instrumental in expanding the work. He also took the lead on the STAR project (fusing *Reflect* and *Stepping Stones*) helping to facilitate grassroots empowerment in the face of HIV/AIDS.

Chinwuba was a leading voice on education and represented ActionAid Nigeria in many international fora.

Chinwuba was a grassroots man, truly at home in the remote communities. His real passion was for helping people through participatory approaches. He exhibited this even in his private life, spending a lot of doing voluntary work with students and widows in his own local community.



Chinwuba's people skills were unparalleled. He was a sensitive and engaging young man whose example of selflessness inspired his colleagues and friends. Many people will carry on his good works and ensure his legacy never fades.