

Education Action



actionaid

Issue 22

January 2008

Contents

- 2 Editorial
- 3 Advocacy for adults
- 6 Evaluating *Reflect* for literacy
- 9 *Reflect* in Vietnam
Strengthening people's participation
- 12 STAR for literacy and HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support
- 13 The abstinence debate
- 14 Transforming education for girls in Tanzania and Nigeria
- 15 Mozambique campaign on violence against girls in education
- 17 Violence against girls at school – towards sustainable strategies
- 19 Malawi, Mozambique and Sierra Leone steamroll IMF's wage caps
- 22 Education financing in Malawi; civil society action against the IMF
- 24 The impact of non-professional teachers on learning outcomes
- 24 The impact of neo-liberal policies on education in India
- 26 Non-formal primary education: provision for a 'second chance' or violation of human rights?
- 28 Supporting civil society engagement in education budgets
- 30 Education budget tracking at community level
- 31 UN award for ActionAid's disaster reduction work
- 33 Communities working towards EFA: school management committees in Ghana
- 34 Children's clubs: a forum for children's active participation as change agents
- 36 Global Campaign for Education 2007 campaigners JOIN UP for Education Rights Now!
- 39 Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education
- 40 The Second ActionAid International Global Education Meeting: Consolidating education work in ActionAid
- 42 Latest publications
- 44 Profile: Education Activist Interview with Maria Khan

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

If you have any comments on this edition or any articles for inclusion in a future edition please contact one of the *Education Action* editorial team:

Balaraba balaraba.aliyu@actionaid.org
David david.archer@actionaid.org
Victorine victorine.djitrinou@actionaid.org
Akanksha akanksha.marphatia@actionaid.org
Emma emma.pearce@actionaid.org
Egi egigayehu.summers@actionaid.org
Dhianaraj dhianaraj.chetty@actionaid.org

ActionAid is a UK registered charity no. 274467

Produced by S37 Design

Cover photograph – ActionAid

Editorial

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 22nd edition of Education Action. Sadly we have said goodbye to Tania Boler who has left the editorial team, but please join me in welcoming Dhianaraj Chetty who is our newest team member.

This issue reflects the events that shaped education in 2007: a critical year as it marked the midway point to achieving the Education For All targets set for 2015. There are signs of hope, with renewed energy in the struggle for education rights, but also there are major challenges.

The first few articles in this issue look at developments in **adult literacy**, starting with how momentum is gathering around the international adult literacy benchmarks developed by the Global Campaign for Education in 2005. This is followed by a summary of plans to strengthen the evaluation of *Reflect* around the world and a look at the use of the *Reflect* approach in Vietnam.

We hear from Elizabeth Nakiboneka about the importance of literacy in the application of the STAR (Societies Tackling Aids through Rights) approach in Uganda. Dhianaraj Chetty explores the debates surrounding the 'abstinence only' and ABC approaches to **HIV prevention**. Julita Nsanjama writes about a new ActionAid project seeking to transform **girls' education** in Nigeria and Tanzania. This is followed by insights from a broad-based national campaign to stop violence against girls in schools in Mozambique and an outline of recommendations from an international meeting on violence against girls at school.

We then take a critical look at diverse challenges to the **financing of education** from different perspectives. We hear about progress

in challenging the IMF's use of excessively low wage bill ceilings. Rachel Moussie writes about the different civil society actors that are taking action to challenge macro-economic conditions in Malawi. Niraj Seth discusses the impact of India's neo-liberal policies on the education sector. A controversial article by Mohammed Muntasim Tanvir challenges NGOs who run **non formal primary education** schemes in Bangladesh – and calls for resistance to the exporting of this approach. We also hear about community level budget tracking work in several countries.

In other articles we learn about the coveted Sasakawa award, received by ActionAid for its work on **disaster risk reduction** through schools in nine countries, about school management committees in Ghana and children's clubs in Nepal. This edition also includes an update on the 2007 **Global Week of Action** when five million people were mobilized around 'Education Rights Now' – and the Global Campaign for Education outline plans for the action week in 2008. This leads into an article about the innovative work of the **Latin American Campaign** for the Right to Education.

Finally, we present you with details of our latest publications, all of which you can download at our website www.actionaid.org. Our back-page spotlight falls on education activist Maria Khan of the Asia South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education who also sits on the board of the Global Campaign for Education.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Please remember to get in touch with myself or anyone else on the editorial team if you have any articles you would like to contribute to future editions – or any comments on this edition.

Balaraba Aliyu

Abbreviations:

ANCEFA – Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
BWI – Bretton Woods Institution
CEF – Commonwealth Education Fund
CSO – civil society organisation
DFID – UK Department for International Development
EFA – Education for All
FAWE – Forum for African Women Educationalists
FTI – Fast Track Initiative

GATS – General Agreement on Trade in Services
GCE – Global Campaign for Education
IMF – International Monetary Fund
INGO – international non-government organisation
MDGs – Millennium Development Goals
NGO – non-government organisation
PTA – parent teacher association
SMC – school management committee
UPE – universal primary education
WTO – World Trade Organisation

Advocacy for adults

Advancing the International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy

by David Archer

Although there are officially close to one billion adults who are illiterate, and closer to two billion people struggle with basic literacy skills, there has been almost no investment in adult literacy programmes in recent decades around the world. Donors are reluctant to fund programmes and governments are reluctant to prioritise adults when national education budgets struggle to respond to the growing demands of formal education systems.

But at last there are some signs that this may be changing. Following the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report, the case for investment is stronger than ever. The International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy, developed by the Global Campaign for Education, show that there is broad consensus on the design of effective programmes. A major international workshop in Abuja in February 2007, issued a rousing Call for Action – and even the UN Literacy Decade has gained some momentum through regional workshops convening first ladies, ministers and donors. These efforts are increasingly inter-connected and a constituency is now emerging that may succeed in galvanising new action and new investment in adult literacy.

In 2004 / 2005 the Global Campaign for Education was commissioned by the EFA Global Monitoring Report and UNESCO to conduct the largest ever survey of adult literacy programmes, in order to develop a credible set of benchmarks on adult literacy that could be used internationally. The process included initial consultations with 100 key informants, a detailed survey of 67 adult literacy programmes across 35 countries, the analysis of results and drafting of benchmarks by 10 leading global experts; and the verification of the benchmarks by 142 respondents in 47 countries. This was a huge and unprecedented international process involving ministries of education, directors of literacy programmes, multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs and academics.

The result was a set of **12 very simple benchmarks**, which represent a strong global consensus. These benchmarks are designed to help governments who are committed to developing adult literacy programmes. They provide a simple framework for policy debate – for new national dialogue on literacy.

The Global Campaign for Education was commissioned by the EFA Global Monitoring Report and UNESCO to conduct the largest ever survey of adult literacy programmes, in order to develop a credible set of benchmarks on adult literacy that could be used internationally.

They are not designed as a set of conditions that everyone must follow, as there are differences in context. But they do represent a powerful synthesis of global learning.

A full list of the benchmarks follows on page four.



Activists mobilising Bamako to demand 3% of education budgets for adult education



The 12 International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy

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 (eg 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 (eg 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 + 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 (eg through including adult literacy in the Fast Track Initiative).

These benchmarks have been distributed to over **100 countries** and have been translated into several languages. There have been national workshops about the benchmarks in dozens of countries.

In February 2007, a **major international workshop** on the benchmarks was organised by the Ministry of Education in Nigeria and ActionAid. In preparation new research was commissioned from Vietnam and Tanzania, analysing the evolution of their national literacy programmes since independence in the context of the benchmarks (see *Reading between the lines, Jude Fransman, ActionAid 2007*).

60 participants from 24 countries came to the **Abuja workshop** including Ministers of Education, Permanent Secretaries, Directors and Managers of National Literacy Programmes, United Nations officials, donors and civil society organisations. After four days the participants issued a **Call for Action** at national and international levels. Nationally they called for:

- **new literacy surveys** to reveal the true scale of the literacy challenge
- **national dossiers** to show evidence on the benefits of literacy
- **new national dialogue** on literacy policies and practices using the International Benchmarks
- the inclusion of adult literacy in **education sector plans**, especially those submitted to the Fast Track Initiative.

There were also specific demands made to UNESCO, the World Bank, the IMF, donors and others.

Since this meeting we have begun to see new money being put on the table. In May 2007, the Fast Track Initiative donors endorsed a sector-wide education plan for Benin – the first plan that they have ever endorsed which includes a significant investment in adult literacy. Now it is clear, **any country submitting a proposal to the Fast Track Initiative can, indeed should, include adult literacy**. This message needs to be



ActionAid

Many governments continue to believe that donors won't fund adult literacy so they don't bother including adults in their education sector plans – and so the donors can legitimately say that they don't support adults because governments don't include them in their plans. We must break this absurd cycle. No education sector plan should be considered complete if it does not involve adults!

sent out loud and clear to everyone. Many governments continue to believe that donors won't fund adult literacy so they don't bother including adults in their education sector plans – and so the donors can legitimately say that they don't support adults because governments don't include them in their plans. We must break this absurd cycle. No education sector plan should be considered complete if it does not involve adults!

It is clear that the benchmarks have helped to re-galvanise dialogue on adult literacy. They are a powerful tool for giving momentum and focus to the

UN Literacy Decade. Indeed, the benchmarks and the Abuja Call for Action have been shared in plenary sessions at each of the recent regional UNLD conferences held in Doha (March), Beijing (July), Bamako (September) and Delhi (November). There are some reservations that these conferences involve first ladies as key convenors, as this suggests that adult literacy is a charitable activity rather than a core government responsibility. However, the conferences have succeeded in gathering an impressive collection of ministers, government officials and civil society actors to focus on adult literacy. Each of the regional conferences has recognised that the GCE benchmarks offer a practical framework for moving forward. Key recommendations consistent with the benchmarks have found their way into the conclusion of all the conferences.

Much more needs to be done. The existence of hundreds of millions of illiterate adults is a **violation of human rights** on a massive scale. But dealing with adult literacy is at least back on the radar after many years. If the pressure is maintained by all those who are passionate about adult literacy, and if we work together in common platforms, many more breakthroughs could be made in the coming months and years.

To view the above mentioned publications visit www.actionaid.org

Evaluating *Reflect* for literacy

by Jude Fransman, Emma Pearce, Louise Knight and David Archer

In November 2007 participants from 20 countries gathered in Cape Town for a workshop on evaluating the effectiveness of the *Reflect* approach for adult literacy. The workshop was an opportunity to share different evaluations of *Reflect* that have been conducted in recent years, with a view to developing a new evaluation framework that can be used by *Reflect* practitioners in future.

Developments in adult literacy
In 2009 the global adult education constituency will meet in Brazil for the 6th CONFINTEA meeting (a UN-convened meeting on adult education with ministers and CSOs that has happened every 12 years since 1949). As always, adult literacy will be a major part of the agenda, especially since very little progress has been made on reducing adult illiteracy in the past decade. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 recognises that adult literacy is the most neglected of the six EFA goals. To reverse the decades of under-investment there is an urgent need for new evidence about the effectiveness of literacy programmes and the links between literacy and other development goals.

One of the most exciting innovations in adult literacy that has spread rapidly since the last CONFINTEA conference in Hamburg in 1997, has been the *Reflect* approach, which won UN Literacy Prizes in 2003, 2005 and 2007 and which is now used by over 500 organisations in 70 countries. *Reflect* has been successful in linking the literacy acquisition process with individual and community empowerment, strengthening the capacity of millions to secure their basic rights. Though initially focussed on linking literacy and empowerment, *Reflect* has evolved dramatically over the years. There are many contexts where *Reflect* practitioners do not seek to address literacy specifically, but focus instead on empowerment, on governance or on broader development goals. Even if literacy is not a conscious part of the agenda, these programmes still use and impact on literacy in many ways.

One of the most exciting innovations in adult literacy has been the *Reflect* approach which is now used by over 500 organisations in 70 countries. *Reflect* has been successful in linking the literacy acquisition process with individual and community empowerment, strengthening the capacity of millions to secure their basic rights.



Evaluating *Reflect*
However, there is a desperate shortage of effective evaluation evidence. *Reflect* programmes operate in diverse contexts and approaches to documentation and evaluation have been equally diverse, making it difficult to consolidate evidence and learning. Evaluations of *Reflect* in the past have been primarily *summative* (ie proving the value-added of the approach as compared to other approaches). They have also been highly contextualised, with organisations in different countries conducting specific evaluations to

suit their needs. In 2001 Abby Riddell conducted a review of 13 *Reflect* evaluations. Her recommendations included the need to better define outcomes (given the conflict between literacy and empowerment objectives) and to foster a culture of evaluation. Though her findings were widely shared, at this point in time ActionAid was striving to hand ownership of *Reflect* over to regional networks to ensure contextualised, bottom-up practice. As a result, evaluations continued to be summative (in order to promote *Reflect* to different governments and donors).

Today, the regional *Reflect* networks have grown in strength and the approach has been successfully contextualised in numerous locations. True to its evolutionary nature, advocates of *Reflect* are keen to continue to expand it to take into account new understandings of literacy which better respond to the real needs and priorities of participants. However, many practitioners have also realised that a new evaluation mechanism is needed to ensure that programme objectives and participants' own learning expectations are being met, while allowing some flexibility for these to evolve or even change throughout the course of the programme. This type of evaluation is *formative* as well as summative (in that it informs better practice as well as demonstrating the extent of its effectiveness.)

Crucially, this type of evaluation **is also a pedagogy in its own right** since literacy and other skills are enhanced by the very process of participating in the evaluation process. Involvement in such an evaluation will therefore enhance the ownership of programmes by participants, promoting sustainability and transparency. It will enable individuals to reflect on their own learning experience whilst the circle as a whole reflects on the collective learning experience. The expectations of participants are therefore just as significant as the programme objectives of implementers and the broader social goals of CSOs, governments and donors, all of which should be taken into account.

An evaluation framework
To initiate a process of developing a new evaluation framework, ActionAid developed a draft framework that was piloted in South Africa in May 2007. In October 2007 a workshop was held to sensitize UK-based research students to the initiative and critique the framework. This was followed by a one-week workshop in Cape Town in November 2007, convening *Reflect* practitioners from 20 countries.

A key starting point for the Cape Town workshop was to build an

understanding of the terms 'literacy' and 'literate environment'. Even when no official definition of literacy and the literate environment is used, we subscribe to certain understandings and assumptions. These assumptions implicitly or explicitly inform our objectives, the methodologies we decide to use and the type of evaluation process we embark upon. Coming to a broad consensus on a working definition is therefore important to ensure consistency between the understandings of different actors.



Workshop participants

An understanding of literacy
Starting with a compilation of different understandings of literacy by all workshop participants and the establishment of a 'definition commission/understand band' who were charged to synthesise these into a provisional understanding, a working definition was arrived at:

"Literacy is the continuing process of acquiring and using reading, writing and numeracy skills, together with the critical understanding of the political, social and economic environment, which contribute to personal and community development."

The workshop did not arrive at an official 'definition' for the literate environment. However, over the course of discussions, some degree of consensus was reached:

"I think that the literate environment includes institutions, materials and processes. These environments enable people to use their literacy skills and motivate them to use their literacy skills. For example, women in Angola who sell food now are being asked to provide a bill and so they need to learn how to read and write. People criticise the government of Angola saying that it has a very high level of illiteracy but we say that there is not a strong literate environment. People don't live in a literate environment and they are excluded."

A literate environment might include three key aspects:

- **Institutions**
- **Resources**
- **Processes (including knowledge/power relations)**

Principles of evaluation

The workshop also explored different understandings of evaluation and the power dynamics involved in evaluations. A wide range of evaluations were shared and critically analysed, including:

- Three circle level evaluations
- Two internal evaluations
- Three external evaluations
- Three national level evaluations
- One trans-national level evaluation

From these experiences participants drew out a set of core principles for future evaluations of *Reflect*. Again these emerged from a process that started with brainstorming and passed through a 'principle commission' to be condensed and then verified. The result was the following:

A sound evaluation process should:

- **Be contextually appropriate and make use of local knowledge to manage the evaluation process.**
- **Be an ongoing learning process embedded in the project from the start.**
- **Focus on the changing realities of Reflect circle participants (knowledge, skills, literacy practices...) and include an ongoing analysis of the associated power dynamics.**
- **Take into account the interests of different stakeholders at different stages of the evaluation process (setting goals, identifying indicators, gathering and analysing data).**
- **Ensure that all stakeholders have access to information and decision making concerning the evaluation process.**
- **Build in vertical and horizontal accountability across stakeholder groups, particularly downward accountability to circle participants and other community actors.**
- **Create feedback mechanisms in an action and reflection orientated process.**
- **Endeavour to use the resources available (money, time, people...) to maximum effect, bearing in mind the guiding principles.**

Though initially focussed on linking literacy and empowerment, *Reflect* has evolved dramatically over the years. There are many contexts where *Reflect* practitioners do not seek to address literacy specifically, but focus instead on empowerment, on governance or on broader development goals. Even if literacy is not a conscious part of the agenda, these programmes still use and impact on literacy in many ways.

There was also an extensive sharing of participatory tools that can be used at different stages in the evaluation process, from baseline data collection (especially mapping the literate environment) to evaluating the learning process and governance of *Reflect* programmes, and on to evaluating outcomes or impact.

There were many more activities than can be documented in a short article. However, it is important to record that at the end of the workshop an 'Evaluation Framework Commission' was established which will further elaborate a new framework for the evaluation of *Reflect*.

Next steps

As the new evaluation framework is developed three key activities are planned:

- a) Collecting existing evaluations that have been conducted in the past few years and doing a synthesis of these. If you have an evaluation please send it to emma.pearce@actionaid.org
- b) Supporting new evaluations of *Reflect* in the coming months that can be informed by the new evaluation framework (when it is finalised). These include evaluations planned in Madagascar, The Gambia, Angola, Zambia, Lesotho and Kenya. If you are planning any new evaluations of *Reflect* programmes, please contact Emma Pearce.
- c) Supporting new *Reflect* programmes that can integrate a new evaluation framework from the very start. New *Reflect* programmes that have expressed an interest in doing this include programmes in Kenya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, Bangladesh, India, Tanzania, Zambia and Mali. Again, if you are planning a new *Reflect* programme and would be interested in this evaluation framework, contact Emma.

We very much hope that this evolving process, being led by the South Africa *Reflect* Network with support from ActionAid's International Education Team will both improve the practice of literacy in *Reflect* programmes and strengthen the culture of evaluation in *Reflect* programmes. Working together as *Reflect* for literacy practitioners we hope to have a significant impact on the CONFINTEA process that culminates in Brazil in 2009.

For more information contact:

Louise Knight:
louknight@mweb.co.za

Emma Pearce:
emma.pearce@actionaid.org

Jude Fransman:
judefransman@yahoo.co.uk

Reflect in Vietnam

Strengthening people's participation

by Truong Quoc Can and Saroj Dash

Despite significant improvements in Vietnam in terms of economic growth and human development, there are still huge numbers of adults who are illiterate. Most of them live in remote and mountainous areas of the country. There is a huge disparity between those living in advantaged regions (mostly Kinh) and those in remote disadvantaged areas, both in terms of access to and quality of education. Some 35% of people considered illiterate live in these areas, which make up only 13.5% of the total population. This rate of illiteracy is particularly high among ethnic minorities; it stands at 75% in the Dao communities and 88% in the H'mong communities. In certain cases the number of illiterate women is double that of men.

This high illiteracy rate among poor and excluded people is a major obstacle to their meaningful participation in development. Their participation in any initiative to fight for their rights is challenged by the illiteracy that traps them in a vicious cycle of poverty. For them, the concept of rights is meaningless and is considered to be completely irrelevant to the difficulties that they are facing in daily life.



Repairing a road together

ActionAid



ActionAid

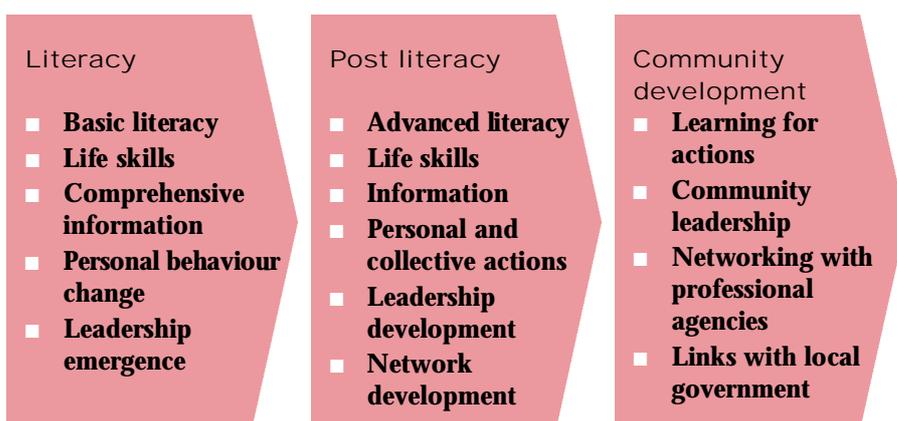
Mrs Phan Thi Diem, a *Reflect* participant, becomes a member of the local people's council.

Realizing rights

The *Reflect* approach to adult learning and empowerment is being piloted in Vietnam with the H'Mong, Dao, Thai, and Muong ethnic minority communities in the northern mountainous provinces and the Kh'mer and Cham groups in the south west of the country. These communities are considered the most disadvantaged groups in the country. The *Reflect* programme provides learners with literacy skills, and other relevant practical knowledge such as life skills, agricultural production techniques, healthcare and income generation. Participants are also introduced to broader development concepts such as gender equity, legal frameworks and policies. This training gives people a good understanding of rights and

accountability, and enables them to make their voices heard.

The *Reflect* programme started in two districts of Vietnam in 2000 and has been accompanied by a slow but steady decline in illiteracy rates, particularly among ethnic minorities. However, the majority of the population is still unable to speak or read and write the main Vietnamese (Kinh) dialect. The programme has now expanded to 11 districts across the country, reaching more than 12,000 participants. Throughout the process, participants are linked up to the existing professional agencies and governmental bodies at local level. The process is carried out in three phases, as illustrated in the diagram below:



The *Reflect* programme provides learners with literacy skills, and other relevant practical knowledge such as life skills, agricultural production techniques, healthcare and income generation. Participants are also introduced to broader development concepts such as gender equity, legal frameworks and policies. This training gives people good understanding of rights and accountability, and enables them to make their voices heard.



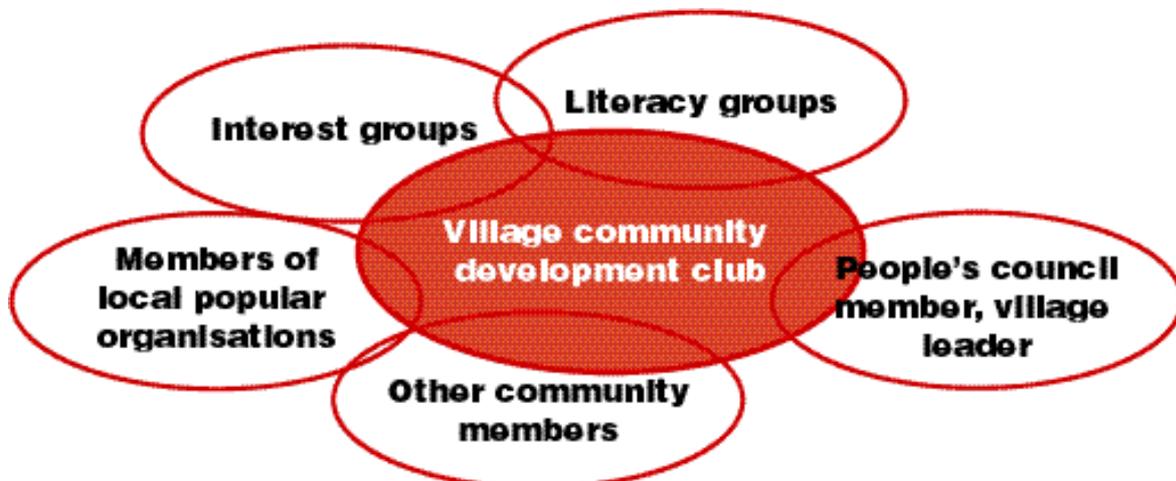
Reflect participants sharing their experience on growing mushrooms

It is worth mentioning that some government literacy programmes are also being coordinated in the area, mainly for women. However, due to the poor quality of these programmes, once they end, participants often revert to illiteracy. This prevents them from accessing or understanding their legal rights to participation and information. In contrast, the *Reflect* circles have helped to change the very definition of education through teaching basic skills that lead to empowerment. So far, the *Reflect* experiences have been able to achieve the following:

- The programme has reached more than 12,000 people, mostly women of ethnic minorities in 12 provinces.
- 97 village community development clubs (VCDC) have been established.
- Four women have become members of the local people's council (there were none before).
- Many participants have become active members or leaders of local popular organisations such as women's or youth unions.
- A training pack on *Reflect* for adult literacy has been introduced and authorized by the Ministry of Education and Training.

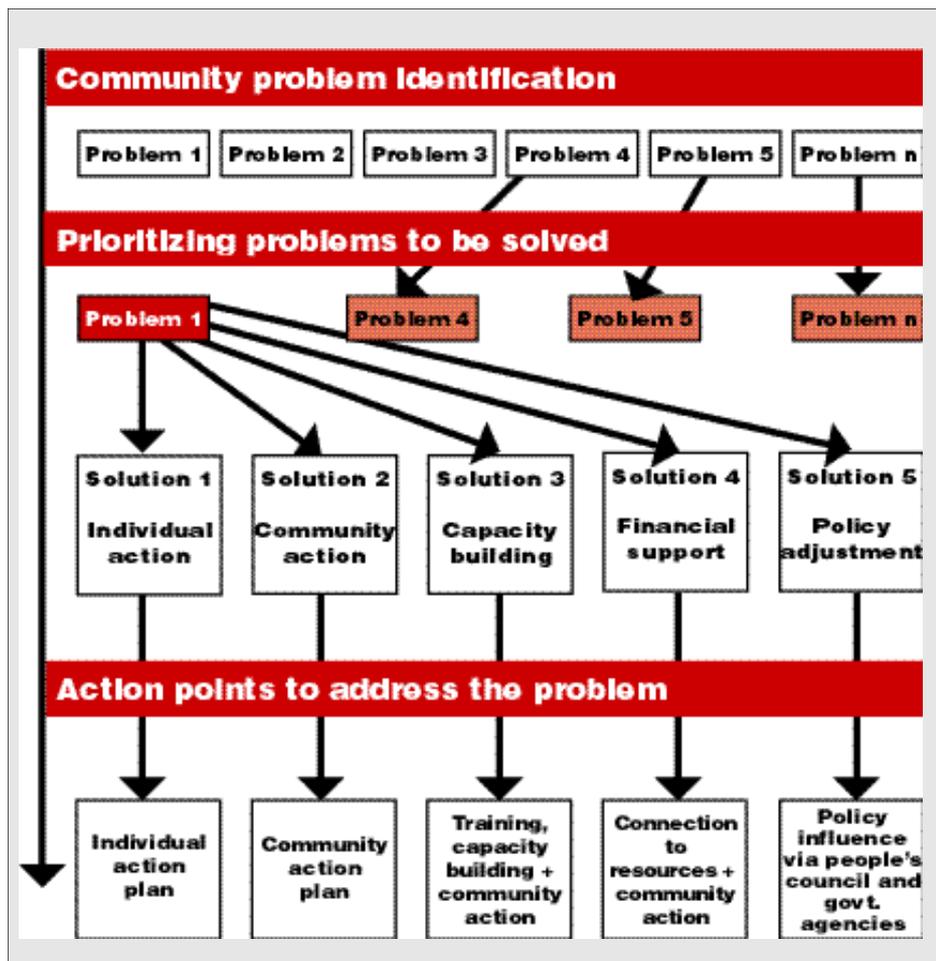
Village community development clubs Work with the *Reflect* groups has resulted in the emergence of stronger popular movements, which allow for formal engagement between learners, communities and local government. In many communities, *Reflect* participants have organized themselves into village community development clubs, which are led by local facilitators and involve the extended membership of the wider community. The clubs are linked with other local bodies including the local people's council and the local community learning centre (CLC).

The place of the VCDC in the community:



The village community development clubs identify problems and possible solutions in order to develop action plans for the community. The clubs are also able to make direct demands for policy change to relevant government officials.

The *Reflect* cycle followed by the VCDCs:



The CLC is essentially a resource centre offering training and cultural activities and established and supported by the government. The CLC's management board consists of representatives from the local government and from local popular organisations. It coordinates all non-formal education activities and development initiatives in the community. The CLCs liaise with VCDCs on regular basis; they collect all the information, requests and demands from the community. The requests are later included in joint work plans based on which the community carries out its advocacy to the local government.

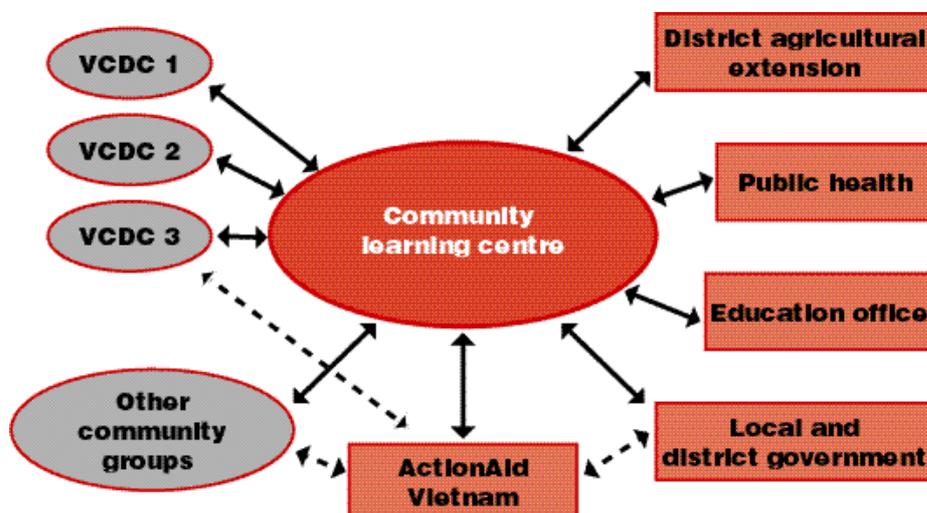


ActionAid

Participants show their commitment to maintaining the village community development club

Links between the VCDCs, CLCs and local government:

Vietnam is a one-party communist state. It has moved from a war torn economy to one of the fastest growing economies in Southeast Asia. The country has made significant progress in poverty alleviation and social development, but it still faces the core challenge of establishing an egalitarian education system for its people that puts them at the centre of its development. *Reflect* provides a practical solution to this problem, increasing individual's and communities' capacity to play an active role in the development process.



For more information contact:
can.truongquoc@actionaid.org

STAR for literacy and HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support

by Elizabeth Nakiboneka

STAR, which has evolved from the Reflect approach to adult literacy, tailoring Reflect to the particular challenges of dealing with HIV and AIDS, has been piloted by ActionAid Uganda for about three years. It is showing great potential to empower communities through rights awareness, and information generation and dissemination on a wide range of issues including agriculture, education, gender and women's rights in the context of HIV and AIDS. Through regular meetings, which often feed into wider community dialogue, participants have the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills. Depending on the local context, STAR groups explore a wide range of household and community issues for discussion and action, developing literacy skills as an integral part of the process. They also carry out a number of actions to support individuals, households and the wider community in HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment access, care and support.

Coming to terms with HIV and AIDS STAR specifically targets PLHA groups. Through the STAR group meetings the facilitators are able to disseminate vital information on HIV and AIDS to members. This is done creatively using different materials such as newspaper cuttings which are translated into the local language, which facilitators disseminate to group members according to language and literacy skills. The group members then share this with their families and the larger community. Training is provided on a wide range of topics, including treatment of HIV and AIDS, knowledge and communication skills to help people disclose their illness to loved ones, the use of herbal medicines to treat and prevent opportunistic infections as well as income generation. The support processes strengthen members' confidence, leading to increasing numbers of people coming to terms with their condition and breaking the silence about the virus.

Harriet is a member of such a group; she is HIV positive and a member of the Ttanda STAR group in Mityana district. Harriet joined the group out of curiosity and loneliness. Having lost her husband, she decided to leave the city and return to her home village. Before joining the group she had very little knowledge about HIV and AIDS and even though she had lost her

The support processes strengthen members' confidence, leading to increasing numbers of people coming to terms with their condition and breaking the silence about the virus.

husband to AIDS she didn't think it was important for her to be tested. While in the group, she learnt the importance of testing and when the group demanded community outreach VCT (voluntary counselling and testing) services she did not miss the opportunity:

"I had heard about HIV testing but it didn't make sense to me to test since it had been confirmed that my husband had died of the disease. But STAR opened my eyes, now I know it is important to confirm ones status and know the CD4 count, because I had started taking septrin and not ARVs, but when my blood was tested for CD4 I was started on the drugs."

Support in treatment The groups discuss issues of adherence for those on treatment, and some groups have developed internal support networks to assist each other in ensuring timely and consistent taking of medication. STAR groups often invite expert

resource people to talk to them about treatment-related issues. Through their STAR groups, PLHAs have been mobilized and have formed and strengthened village, sub county and district structures in order to lobby for improved HIV and AIDS services. Harriet's case provides a strong example of this:

"One day after a group training on the different drugs available in the country and their combinations and treatment given to mothers to prevent them from passing the virus to their children, I went back home to cross check the type of drugs I have been taking. Because all along I would just take what the nurses give me... Fortunately, I had been keeping the tins to store my herbal medicines. On checking them what surprised me was that the current tin I was using had expiry dates which had passed two months back but I had never bothered to check before and all along I had been taking expired drugs! I took the tin to our facilitator to confirm and it was true the drugs had expired two months back." said Harriet.

Harriet's case was followed up by the facilitator and the STAR implementing organisation, which invited the district director of health services to the STAR meeting to explain. At national level, ActionAid used this case as evidence to engage the government on the issue of expired drugs, under-doses given by health workers, drug stocks running out and global fund mismanagement in the country. Harriet was invited to give her testimony to the Ministry of Health permanent secretary.

We have observed an increased expression of the need for reading and writing by members with no previous literacy skills. Others are demanding to learn to read English because much of the critical information they need for HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment is in English. This is being responded to and addressed by facilitators at group level.

**For more information contact:
elizabeth.nakiboneka@actionaid.org**

The abstinence debate

by Dianarej Chetty

In June 2007, ActionAid and the UK Working Group on Education and HIV/AIDS jointly published 'The abstinence debate: condoms, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and ideology'. Written as a policy brief, the paper contrasts the widely divergent viewpoints that characterize the arguments of those supporting an abstinence viewpoint and those supporting a more comprehensive approach.

In the run up to World AIDS Day in 2007, there is vigorous debate in the international community about the political and scientific basis of HIV-prevention programmes that promote 'abstinence only' as the solution to reducing the risk of HIV transmission. The debate is especially relevant in the education sector where there are often strongly polarized positions on what messages on sexuality and sexual behaviour are appropriate for promotion in school-based education and prevention programming on HIV and AIDS.

The arguments both for and against abstinence-based programming rest on a number of assumptions: the effectiveness of the approach, research findings, sexual health and rights, pedagogy and gender in the context of AIDS education. Despite these differences, there is common ground on how best to understand and use abstinence in HIV-prevention education. Few people, if any, would argue against the idea of delaying sexual debut when dealing with children. Children should first be educated and empowered to understand their sexuality, sexual and reproductive health rights – but not engaged in any sexual practice till they are physically and emotionally mature. The reality is that young people are often engaged in sexual activity for a range of reasons. At worst, this could be in the context of poverty where transactional or coercive sex becomes a financial necessity. Alternately it could simply be that their cultural and social contexts permit them to be sexually active at an early age.

The arguments both for and against abstinence-based programming rest on a number of assumptions: the effectiveness of the approach, research findings, sexual health and rights, pedagogy and gender in the context of AIDS education.

For ActionAid, the critical difference centres on two arguments:

- Firstly, comprehensive education programmes on sex and relationships are not linked to earlier sexual initiation. In other words, there is no substance to the argument that knowing about sex promotes promiscuity.
- Secondly, there is no valid 'public health' basis for abstinence-only programming and the ideological basis of this approach undermines the rights of young people (more often young women who are at greater risk of infection if they have no access to education and prevention services).

Since its inception, the US government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has given institutional credibility to abstinence-only programming through tied aid and deliberate exclusion of programmes involving condom distribution; work with sex workers and reproductive health services – especially abortion. In fact, US\$1 billion is reserved for groups working on AIDS without promoting condoms¹. In the context of funding for AIDS education and prevention, this stance has massive knock-on effects in smaller and poorer countries where PEPFAR is by far the largest source of bilateral aid to HIV and AIDS programmes.

In September 2007, yet more results were released by researchers reviewing the impacts of abstinence only and abstinence plus programmes². The evidence is clear – 'abstinence only' is failing and is misleading in its claims. Civil society organisations face difficult choices in the developing world when confronted with the loss of potential funding on a matter of principle. ActionAid believes in the importance of opposing PEPFAR's abstinence only approach to prevention education, in order to change US government policy and to give national governments and their citizens the right to determine what is appropriate and effective in the fight against AIDS.

For more information on ActionAid India's work on HIV and AIDS in the education sector, contact: dhianaraj.chetty@actionaid.org
To view the full report, please visit http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/aa_abstinence_reportPRINT.pdf

¹ 'Time to grow up', The Economist, September 20th 2007

² The Economist, September 20th 2007.

Transforming education for girls in Tanzania and Nigeria

by Julita Nsanjama

The review of the Millennium Development Goals in 2005 showed that the majority of countries, especially in Africa, were a long way off reaching the target of gender parity in education. A similar conclusion was reached by the EFA Midterm review in 2007. Deep-rooted social and cultural values mean that many of the obstacles for girls lie in their own households, with parents and the wider community. Girls may fail to attend school because of the fear of violence at school or on the journey to school, or drop out early due to pregnancy, early marriage or other family responsibilities. While the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women calls for the protection of girls against abuse and discrimination, most governments have not developed mechanisms to protect girls at all levels.

This situation also increases girls' vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. A recent study by ActionAid, Girl Power, shows that in sub-Saharan Africa 75% of young people living with HIV are young women or girls. Yet the same study reports that girls who complete secondary education have a lower risk of infection than girls who have only finished primary education. More highly educated girls and women are better able to negotiate safer sex and reduce HIV rates.

Girls' education in Nigeria and Tanzania:

In **Nigeria** girls receive an average of two years less schooling than boys. Of the 8.1 million children out of school, 4.3 million are girls. While national averages show a gradual closing of the gender gap, the situation in rural areas remains bad. It is reported that fewer than 50% of girls in rural areas complete their education. Some 62% of young people living with HIV and AIDS are young women and girls, while access to information on HIV and AIDS among younger women is poor.

In **Tanzania**, while access to information on HIV and AIDS is high, girls still suffer discrimination and increased vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. The report shows that girls drop out of school earlier than boys, particularly due to cultural reasons such as early marriages and pregnancy. In addition, poor school infrastructures and poor sanitation negatively affect girls' education.



Paul England / ActionAid

The transforming education for girls project:

To respond to this, ActionAid has secured funding from Comic Relief for an innovative five-year girls' education project to be implemented in the two countries by two organisations: Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) in Nigeria and Maarifa in Tanzania. The project will be carried out in three states in Northern Nigeria, reaching 72 schools (36 primary and 36 secondary) where girls' enrolment and completion is particularly poor. In Tanzania, the project will reach 60 schools (50 primary and 10 secondary) in rural communities.

The project seeks to work with girls, teachers, parents and school management committees on behavioural change programmes that will facilitate and promote enrolment, retention and completion rates for girls while also addressing the social practices that lead to gender inequalities in education and high rates of HIV and AIDS in girls and young women.

The project objectives are to:

- Mobilise and build the capacity of girls on their rights to and in education and on HIV and AIDS.
- Incorporate participatory modules on HIV and gender into the national pre-service and in-service teacher training curriculum in Nigeria and Tanzania.
- Facilitate capacity building and ongoing support to school management committees, parent teacher associations and the wider community, addressing HIV and girls' rights to and in education.
- Facilitate the development of national legal and policy frameworks that will enhance and protect girls' rights in school.
- Build the capacities of CAPP and Maarifa to be leading national organisations on education, gender and HIV.

education and their vulnerability to HIV infection, stigma, and the increased burden of care involved with looking after family members affected by HIV and AIDS. The campaign is being funded by ActionAid Mozambique in coordination with UNICEF SIDA, but other financiers are being negotiated. The campaign's objectives include:

- To consolidate the network of organisations that work in women's defence
- To put the problem of violence against women and girls on the national agenda
- To make sure that legislation on matters of sexual abuse is applied and reinforced.

The campaign was launched in August 2006, initially in Maputo, and later extending to five of the ten provinces in Mozambique. More than 10,000 people participated in the launch, including students, NGOs and government representatives.

After the launch, technical groups were put together, including experts in the field, members of

NGOs, government officials and young people, particularly girls. These groups have carried out awareness raising and advocacy in communities and schools, on the issue of girl's sexual abuse in education. The campaign is targeted at three groups:

- 1 **State machinery and relevant ministries and departments** – reminding states of their obligations under international covenants and advocating domestic law reforms, influencing states to review laws.
- 2 **Women, girls, boys and men as members of the community** – challenging cultural justification, normalisation and trivialisation of violence against girls.
- 3 **The media** – lobbying senior editors to move from episodic reporting to the framing of issues of violence against girls in education and HIV and AIDS leading to public dialogue.

In terms of strategy, the campaign started with research to examine national legislation on domestic violence including rape, legal age for marriage and trafficking. There was

also a mapping of experiences of survivors of violence and girls living with HIV to get first hand accounts of the issues that cause vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. The next step was, alliance building and capacity building to foster links with women's rights organisations and networks of women living with HIV and AIDS in order to generate feminist activism and leadership on HIV and AIDS issues. This was key to the component of the campaign that is focused on policy advocacy for the realignment of HIV and AIDS policies and programmes so that girls' right to be free of violence is meaningfully addressed. Another key component is public awareness raising, using the media, debates, drama and workshops.

Since its inception, the campaign has covered much ground and seen many achievements but the greatest challenge it faces is the cultural aspect of the way violence against girls is perceived. Because sexual abuse constitutes a matter of embarrassment and stigma for the girls and their families, cases of violence are often dealt with within families and not reported, and



In Marracuene, ActionAid Mozambique works in partnership with the Women's Association for Democracy (Assomude), which has been dealing with cases of violence against women and girls, and has been vital in the identification, monitoring and reporting of such cases in the district.

Hanifa Mariamo Mandlate, age 17, lives with her parents in Momemo. Hanifa is one of the many girls who were sexually abused by the director of the primary school in '12 de Outubro', where she was in 7th grade. She tells her story:

My name is Hanifa Mariamo Mandlate, I am 17 years old and I live with my parents in Momemo. I was sexually abused by my school director in 2005 and got pregnant. My daughter is now 15 months old.

Nowadays I'm not in school because there is no one to care for my daughter while I am at school. My mother goes to the farm, and I have to breastfeed because my child has no other food.

My family and community didn't blame me; I only got support from my mother, aunt and brother. My aunt, after being advised by the neighbourhood secretary where we complained, escorted me to Assomude where we presented our second complaint.

Assomude called the director for a meeting with the female lawyer who takes care of these cases. Thanks to Assomude, who took the case to court, the director now has to pay child support, which started in June and July. But in August and September the director didn't send anything, and we had to notify the court.

I know that the director is facing disciplinary action at the DDEC (District Department from Ministry of Education and Culture) and the court is now preparing the trial.

Thanks to the support of Assomude, my child received what is her right and she was registered. Assomude has been following my case and I have been receiving psychological support.

Since its inception, the campaign has covered much ground and seen many achievements but the greatest challenge it faces is the cultural aspect of the way violence against girls is perceived.

because poverty is a prevalent factor, it is not unheard of for families to agree to accept a 'fine' from abusers as compensation for the offences. Police authorities are only involved when negotiations become difficult (for instance if the abuser doesn't agree with the amount for the fine) and the cases rarely are sent to court.

Current legislation is also a challenge. When a teacher commits an act of violence, it only provides for the demotion of the offending teacher or for the student to be transferred to night courses. The campaign has brought this to the attention of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which has recognized the problem and is studying ways to improve this.

Perhaps the biggest achievement was seen at the campaign's first anniversary, where several women and girls who were victims of abuse spoke out with courage and confidence to denounce the crime committed against them and demand that perpetrators be punished.

Other achievements were:

- Establishment of the Cabinet for Legal and Psychological Support to Women and Girl Victims of Violence in Manhiça District. Six nuclei were created locally, and legal training was given to the workers. During 2006, 600 cases were reported. Information on family law was shared with 12,374 people (including 7,742 women) and government support has been given for the registration of 15,674 orphans and vulnerable children.
- Training of staff from 26 police stations in the South region;
- Establishment of seven technical groups in schools, where victims can report abuse and their cases are directed to the cabinets specifically created for the purpose at the police stations.

The campaign will continue its work in Mozambique. The main actions for next year include:

- To continue building the capacity of technical groups at various levels;
- To produce more advocacy material (there is already a manual and pamphlets).
- To continue advocating for parliament to approve the Law against Domestic Violence and the Law of Child Protection.

For more information contact:
nacima.figia@actionaid.org or
paula.mendonca@actionaid.org

Violence against girls at school – towards sustainable strategies

by Victorine Kemonou Djitrinou

Some 82 participants, representing ministries of education, teachers' unions, national education coalitions, women's associations, FAWE (Forum of African Women Educationalists), pupils and students from Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Rwanda, met in Saly, Senegal from 1 to 3 December 2007, invited by UNIFEM and ActionAid International to discuss issues around violence against girls at school as an obstacle to their right to and in education. This meeting had the following objectives:

- Provide a forum for civil society organisations, government officials and other partners within the region to reflect on the problem of violence against girls at school, reinforce partnerships around girls' education and illustrate how this affects progress towards the achievement of education for all, gender parity and equity in their different countries.
- Gather the views of pupils and students as well as their contributions regarding solutions to the problem of violence against girls at school.
- Examine the challenges faced by countries and lessons learnt during the implementation of programmes to address violence against girls at school, and highlight best practices.
- Contextualise the model policy developed as an output from a similar meeting held in Harare in 2006 which brought together SADC countries and agreed on strategies to fight violence against girls at school.

After the opening ceremony in the presence of the Senegalese Minister of Education, the meeting started



Stuart Freeman / ActionAid

with the presentation of an overview of findings from studies carried out by ActionAid in Africa, Asia and Latin America on violence against girls at school as an obstacle to girls' access, retention and achievement. Discussions around the findings of national studies, experiences from different countries, as well as input from the schoolgirls, contributed to a shared understanding of the issue of violence against girls at school and its direct links with girls' education.

This shared understanding of the issues led participants to develop clear recommendations on the main points; these will later be taken into consideration at national level with the model policy as a reference.

Recommendations

Based on lessons from discussions, participants at the regional conference on violence against girls at school held at Saly from 1 to 3 December 2007, recommend the following:

National governments should:

- Carry out national research in collaboration with all key actors on violence against girls at school and use the results to develop a legal framework which integrates all related aspects within the education system. The model policy elaborated after the Harare workshop in 2006 and endorsed at this meeting should be used as a reference.
- Put in place permanent data collection and analysis mechanisms, available and accessible to all. These mechanisms should be multi-sectoral and coordinated by the government.
- Make available reliable statistics that will enable key actors and donors to focus their efforts in a concerted way.
- Put in place clear instructions and directives for schools (both public and private) to make school a safe place for all children and break the cycle of violence and discrimination against women in society.
- Intensify the harmonisation of all legislation, including customary laws, to consider a child as any individual less than 18 years old.
- Make education systems integrate violence against girls at school (prevention, identification, handling, etc) as well as HIV and AIDS prevention in teachers' training programmes and in school curricula.
- Recognise girls' education as a means of empowering them to say no to all forms of violence and discrimination and develop school-level mechanisms through which girls can safely report cases of violence.
- Put in place a committee for the coordination and follow-up of the present recommendations (national research, elaboration of a national model policy, code of conduct, etc).

Civil society organisations should:

- Promote the creation of a coalition/movement on the issue of violence against girls at school in order to make it visible on national and regional agendas.
- Collaborate with government officials within the coordination and follow-up committee once put in place.
- Involve all stakeholders especially pupils and students in the search for adequate solutions and programme implementation.
- Carry out together with all key actors, sensitisation campaigns for teachers, pupils and the general public.
- Produce and distribute simplified versions of instruments or texts related to violence against girls at school.

Girls, and other students should:

- Break the silence, speak out against violence at school and make good use of mechanisms put in place.
- Encourage each other to expose perpetrators both in schools and at home or within the family.
- Say no to any form of abuse and promote late sexual activities and safe sex.
- Promote existing mechanisms enabling them to stop violence against girls in school and school-based violence as a whole.

Technical and financial partners should:

- Support the coordination, advocacy and capacity building activities of organisations which are active in violence against girls at school.
- Encourage the integration of violence against girls at school during education budget allocation.

Malawi, Mozambique and Sierra Leone steamroll IMF's wage caps

Announcement to reverse the policy opens the door for sustained advocacy

Akanksha Marphatia

In 2007, new research and sustained advocacy on wage ceilings with the IMF and Ministries of Finance and Education has led to results. ActionAid's report *Confronting the Contradictions*, about the impact of wage bill caps on education, added to work done on health by other organisations¹, and to the IMF's own Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) who released a strong critique of the IMF's influence over aid in Sub-Saharan Africa.²

The combination of these efforts provided enough traction for the IMF to declare its intention to "trim the use of wage bill ceilings" in September. This is a major triumph, but it is only the first step. Will this commitment be implemented? What can education activists do to ensure that this really is a breakthrough? Akanksha Marphatia tells the story so far and suggests some ways forward.

Exposing the truth
Research on the impact of IMF policies on the hiring of teachers and thus quality of education by ActionAid in Malawi, Mozambique and Sierra Leone was brought together in April 2007 in *Confronting the Contradictions: the IMF, wage bill caps and the case for teachers*. The report was officially launched at a panel debate between an ActionAid team, the IMF's Africa Division, the World Bank and CSOs during the time of the Spring IMF/World Bank meetings. The debate led to a public response by the IMF to which ActionAid later issued its own rebuttal.³

Keeping the momentum
In June the World Bank-UNICEF sponsored **School Fees Abolition Conference** in Bamako provided another opportunity to deepen understanding on the impact of wage bills on teachers. Policy briefs from Malawi, Mozambique and Sierra Leone were circulated to government, UN and CSO representatives. Lobbying from civil society organisations pushed Education and Finance Ministers to highlight the impact of IMF policies on education financing in their official statement, "We urge the IMF to include greater

flexibility and support with respect to significantly increased national expenditures for education including the hiring of additional teachers needed to achieve Education for All."

In many countries momentum is underway for developing concrete plans to partner with **teachers' unions** in advocating for bigger budgets and greater numbers of trained teachers. Education International, the teachers' union federation, and ActionAid continue to strengthen collaboration on finance-related issues and violence against girls through regional workshops in Nairobi (October 2007) and Dakar (December 2007) and there are plans for more sub regional meetings to be held in 2008.

In order to engage on discussions on aligning social and macroeconomic goals, and to encourage policymakers to consider alternative policies, ActionAid USA is partnering with ActionAid Malawi, Kenya and Sierra Leone on a two-year **Economic Literacy Project**. The initiative brings together education, health and HIV/AIDS advocates, teachers' unions and local economists to better understand macroeconomics

Why wage bill ceilings impact the hiring of teachers

The 'wage bill' is a line item in the budget through which all public sector workers are hired. As teachers and health workers are the largest group they tend to be the most expensive (although not in terms of individual cost), often occupying a large percentage of the wage bill. In Malawi teachers make up 37% of the total wage bill. In Sierra Leone and Mozambique they make up over 35%.

The level of the ceiling on the wage bill determines how many teachers and health workers can be hired. In Kenya, the wage ceiling is projected to drop from 7.8% of GDP in 2004/5 to 6.6% in 2008/9. If the Government abolishes secondary school fees, will the wage ceiling be expanded to accommodate the increase in demand?

Research in Sierra Leone reveals that the wage ceilings are not always based on Ministry of Education calculations. Often they are based on arbitrary conditionalities based on macroeconomic policies determined by the IMF. In Uganda, spending more on teachers would violate the inflation target of 5%. As a result, the number of teachers was capped, leaving little chance to improve the 50:1 PTR.

Unless a dialogue on how macro policies can support scaling up of spending on teachers takes place with line ministries, teachers unions and CSOs, the trade-off will always be in favour of macroeconomics. And classrooms will be overfull, such as in Mozambique, where there are often 100 children per teacher.

1 Centre for Global Development, (2007), *Does the IMF Constrain Health Spending in Poor Countries? Evidence and an Agenda For Action* <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/14103/>; and Wemos (2006) *IMF macroeconomic policies and health sector budgets*.

2 <http://www.imf.org/External/NP/ieo/2007/ssa/eng/pdf/report.pdf>

3 IMF's response to our report <http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/Calvin%20IMF%20letter%20May%202007.pdf> and our letter [http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/AAI%20response%20to%20IMF%2014%20June%202007%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/AAI%20response%20to%20IMF%2014%20June%202007%20(3).pdf)

and how these policies impact social sectors. This effort also includes training for US-based groups working on education, HIV/AIDS and the IFIs. In December representatives from all four countries will participate in a joint-advocacy effort at the US Congress. **Contact rick.rowden@actionaid.org for more information.**

The influence of the IMF is widespread, and the availability of **evidence** to make a strong case is essential. Studies are now available in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda, and Pakistan.

Fuelling the fire: influencing decision-makers

IMF to "trim the use of wage ceilings"

The IMF's two recent policy papers admit, "...although wage ceilings have been conceived as short-term measures, in practice they have shown a high degree of persistence. Recent Fund guidance emphasizes the need for avoiding the use of wage bill ceilings over extended periods of time, for flexibility in its application (with adequate safeguards for priority sectors), and for clear justification in program documents."

The last year has seen diverse action by civil society in collaboration with key actors at different levels.

At the country level:

- The policy space is being expanded to include CSOs and teachers' unions in discussions with the IMF and government in Sierra Leone in preparation of the launch of the education report on the IMF's wage ceilings in December. This is to be followed by the economic literacy training. **Contact sam.bangura@actionaid.org for more information.**

- Malawi's education and IMF report has been published (see article 'You don't need to be an economist to understand this...'). Next steps include the launch of the national report in close collaboration with the teachers' union and economic literacy workshops with education, health, and women's right advocates. **Contact julie.juma@actionaid.org for more information.**
- Mozambique's IMF and education report was released in November 2007. So far the negotiated increase in the wage ceiling from last year has only lead to the hiring of 9,000 out of 11,000 teachers needed. The PTR remains high at 72:1. Next steps include bringing together education, women's rights and economic justice advocates to develop a national advocacy and campaign strategy. **Contact paula.mendonca@actionaid.org for more information.**
- ActionAid India has already published a new report on the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on financing of education in five states, *India's Tryst with Elementary Education in the Time of Reforms: Policy Constraints and Institutional Gaps* (see page 24). **Contact: niraj.seth@actionaid.org for more information.**

With US decision-makers:

- The IMF's negative impact on education and poverty were made clear in October through two letters to its new Managing Director, Dominique Strauss-Khan, by 120 US NGOs. As a result of this lobbying work, the House Financial Services Committee of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to Strauss-Khan expressing their concern that the Fund's restrictive macroeconomic policies, including low inflation targets and wage bill ceilings are curtailing aid earmarked for education and health sectors in developing countries.

With the IMF and World Bank in Washington DC at the September Annual Meetings:

- On an Oxfam-sponsored panel on its Services for All Campaign, GCE, the Global Movement of Unions, and the Malawi Economic Justice Movement made the case for wage ceilings to be determined by how many trained teachers and health workers are needed. The World Bank was challenged for promoting cost-effective measures such as hiring unqualified teachers and privatising health.
- The Centre for Global Development and the IEO approached ActionAid for a panel discussion to express our joint discontent with the Fund's response to the IEO's report. Top of the agenda was the implementation of the wage bill policy change by the IMF and flexibility in macroeconomic policies. Underlying the discussion was the issue of aid effectiveness. The way in which the IMF blocks spending of aid is well summarised in the IEO's report:

"Within the average, the evidence points to inflation concerns as a major driver of cross-country differences in programmed spending of incremental aid....countries with inflation rates below 5% get to spend 79% of anticipated aid increases, on average, whereas countries with higher inflation get to spend only 15% of such increases, on average."

If the IMF fails to recognize that these thresholds are not defended by the economic literature, then existing aid will not be used for its intended purposes and donors will be discouraged from scaling up their aid. How then will the EFA goals be achieved?

What Next?

Keeping a watch on the IMF's new promises

While the IMF's new policy to restrict the use of wage ceilings is a step forward, pressure must be maintained. Follow if the policy change is in fact being implemented in your country. See if the wage bill still appears in the most recent IMF review in your country (<http://www.imf.org/external/country/index.htm>).

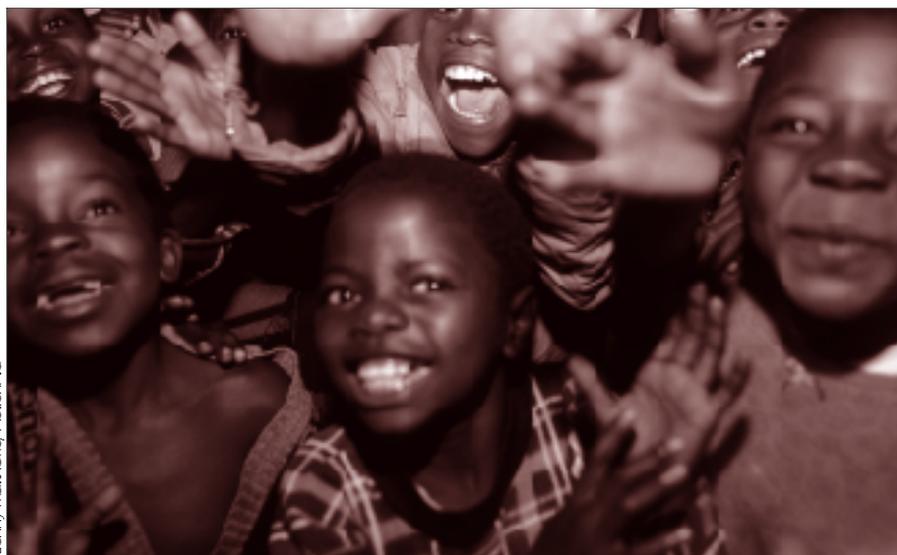
Develop a checklist for your Ministry of Finance, Education and IMF representative:

- At what level of GDP is the wage bill capped?
- Why is the wage bill capped at this level?
- How was the IMF involved?
- Teachers make up what percentage of the wage bill?
- Were estimates on the number of teachers required taken into consideration when setting this cap?
- Can the cap be expanded so more teachers can be hired?
- What impact does the wage bill cap have on the PTR? On quality of education?

In order to help with this process, ActionAid is developing a sample checklist to help countries to monitor the progress made by the IMF in delivering on its new commitments. This checklist is being promoted to FTI donors as one step towards strengthening country level FTI processes and towards enhancing capacity development. Contact us if you want to see this checklist.

Dig deeper

Wage ceilings are a direct limit on the recruitment of staff, however, the constraint on the overall size of the budget, as determined by macroeconomic policies, constitutes an indirect ceiling on staff numbers. Unless the resource envelope can be allowed to expand, by a loosening of the monetary and fiscal targets that determine its magnitude, countries will be forced to maintain low wage



Jenny Matthews/ActionAid

ActionAid is developing a sample checklist to help countries to monitor the progress made by the IMF in delivering on its new commitments. This checklist is being promoted to FTI donors as one step towards strengthening country level FTI processes and towards enhancing capacity development.

bill ceilings, and potentially introduce caps on the number of teachers (as in Sierra Leone, which in 2007 received FTI funding) by themselves.

The IMF maintains it reserves the right to use wage ceilings as a conditionality to “*protect macroeconomic stability.*” Economists have long challenged the Fund's definition of stability and asked if countries really need to maintain low single-digit inflation and fiscal deficit targets. For example, a study by Oxfam showed that in 2003, Senegal's fiscal deficit was targeted to go from -4.0% GDP to -3.5% GDP. This equals an estimated loss of -0.5% of GDP.⁴ The amount sacrificed could have doubled the total education and health expenditures in one year and health expenditures for each three years of the programme.

Uncover the contradiction
How can it be that the same donors that come together on the FTI have representatives that support these restrictive macroeconomic targets of the IMF through membership on the Fund's board? Can these donors seek clarity and justification from their representatives to the IMF on why they continue to support policies that jeopardise the effective use of FTI funds and the scaling up of aid to poor countries?

For more information contact:
akanksha.marphatia@actionaid.org
To see some of the reports mentioned in this article visit www.actionaid.org

4 Oxfam (2003) *The IMF and the Millennium Development Goals: failing to deliver for low income countries.*

Education financing in Malawi; civil society action against the IMF *"You don't need to be an economist to understand this..."*

by Rachel Moussie

You don't need to be an economist to understand that there are not enough teachers in Malawian schools! On average there are 72 pupils per teacher, but in rural areas a teacher may have as many as 120 pupils. Given these large class sizes, teachers find it virtually impossible to provide all their students with the attention they require, they cannot attend to assignments and they find it difficult to identify those students who are lagging behind. All these factors contribute to the low rates of primary education completion. Though enrolment rates for girls and boys in grade 1 are high at 104%, it is estimated that only 27% of girls and 32% of boys complete a full cycle of primary education. There are also too few female teachers in schools. In many rural areas girls have never seen a female teacher; therefore there are no role models to motivate and inspire them to continue with their education. This is yet another factor that leads to higher drop-out rate amongst girls. Primary education may be free in Malawi, but the poor quality means few children master basic literacy skills. These children are being denied their right to education.

Teacher shortages

You don't need to be an economist to understand that the main reason for the teacher shortage is that government cannot recruit more teachers. The International Monetary Fund has placed a ceiling on the wage bill in Malawi. It is through the public sector wage bill that government hires all civil servants including teachers, health workers, and ministry officials amongst others. Placing a ceiling on the wage bill limits the amount of money government can spend on civil servant salaries, as a result government cannot substantially increase the number of civil servants it employs. In Malawi's latest agreement with the IMF under the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF), the wage bill ceiling was set at 8% of GDP. Because the wage bill ceiling is a condition of the PRGF, if more than 8% of GDP is spent on civil servants' wages it is sufficient grounds for the IMF to withdraw the funding it provides to government. In itself, the funding from the IMF does not amount to much in comparison to the aid other donors are providing. However, if the IMF withdraws funding, it sends a strong signal to other donors that the country is not stable and should not receive additional aid. The loss

There are not enough teachers in Malawian schools! On average there are 72 pupils per teacher, but in rural areas a teacher may have as many as 120 pupils.



Mark Phillips / ActionAid

of IMF funding also jeopardises additional aid flows from other donors.

The Ministry of Finance is currently spending 7.9% of GDP on wages in the public sector. Teachers make up 37% of the public sector wage bill making them the single

largest group of civil servants in the country. Placing such a low ceiling on the wage bill inevitably limits the number of teachers the government can hire. At present the government has the capacity to train 3,000 teachers a year. But high rates of attrition mean that these new hires do not significantly increase the teaching stock. Between 2000 and 2004, 4,000 teachers left the service, and a further 2,071 teachers were lost in 2006. Currently, the government only employs 45,268 teachers. To provide quality primary education according to the FTI-EFA benchmark, countries should aim to achieve a 40:1 pupil teacher ratio (PTR). The Ministry of Education is targeting a 60:1 PTR by 2015. To meet this target the government would need to hire 62,000 teachers by 2015. For the PTR to fall to 40:1 by 2015, the government would need to employ over 90,000 teachers!

Macroeconomic policies, including the wage bill ceiling, continue to be negotiated behind closed doors between the IMF, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank with no participation from sector ministries, parliamentarians and civil society. Yet all macroeconomic policies involve trade-offs. Adopting a low wage bill

ceiling may allow the government to meet its 5% inflation target or the 1% fiscal deficit target it set for itself. However, respecting this ceiling also means that government cannot meet the Education for All objectives to provide free quality primary education by 2015.

Civil society voices

In response, civil society organisations in Malawi are calling on their right as citizens to assess the trade-offs for themselves and to have a voice in the decision-making process. McDonald Mumba from the Malawian Human Rights Commission asserts, “*The Malawian Human Rights Commission in partnership with civil society can put pressure on government to engage in a discussion to see how best we can relate issues to do with the rights based approach to issues to do with financing...we want the rights based approach to programming to be included.*”

The first step in this process is to build a strong evidence base. ActionAid Malawi published a national report in October 2007 entitled, *The Impact of IMF Macroeconomic Targets on the Attainment of Education Goals in Malawi*. Building on a review of the economic literature and interviews with the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank, Ministry of Education, parliamentarians, IMF, donors and civil society, the report concluded that despite existing capacity constraints in the education sector, the wage bill ceiling remains a serious barrier to teacher recruitment in Malawi.

In November 2007, ActionAid Malawi brought together a number of education advocates including the Teachers’ Union of Malawi and the Malawi Education Network, for a short introductory training on macroeconomic policies and the role of the IMF in the country. By the end of the meeting, partners requested a more in-depth training workshop with all key civil society organisations to better familiarize themselves with the budget formulation process, IMF organisational structure, and alternative macroeconomic policies.

Economic literacy

In collaboration with ActionAid USA, ActionAid Malawi is undertaking a series of basic introductory training workshops on macroeconomic policies. The economic literacy training will take

place over two years and will include health advocates who are fighting for government to recruit more doctors and nurses in the face of the rising AIDS epidemic. The low wage bill ceiling is also putting unnecessary constraints on the recruitment of additional health workers. The objective of the training sessions is to raise awareness of alternative macroeconomic policies that can enable Malawi to increase its expenditure on education, health and HIV/AIDS and bolster a national campaign against restrictive IMF policies.

The training sessions are the first step in building a civil society that is confident enough and strong enough to challenge government about the devastating impact these policies are having on the education and health sectors. Robert White, a Malawian economist and project coordinator for the ActionAid Malawi training workshops explains:

“The economic literacy project in Malawi is very important because it’s going to provide an opportunity for ordinary people to start understanding how the government goes into agreements with institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. We are going to be able to mobilise Malawians around policies that affect them and have a link to global level institutions, but also we want to make space for civil society in policy forums so that they can contribute and influence the decisions that are made on macroeconomic policies.”

Challenges

Though civil society is moving forward in Malawi, a number of challenges lie ahead. The partnership between the Teachers’ Union of Malawi and ActionAid Malawi must still be formalised. Julie Juma, education coordinator at ActionAid Malawi, explains why this is so crucial, “*By working in partnership with the Teachers’ Union of Malawi (TUM) we will be able to reach out to all the teachers who are directly affected by IMF conditionalities on the wage bill... TUM has country wide coverage and they have the mandate to work with teachers and mobilise them.*”

Though ActionAid Malawi has



Carlin Smith / E/evine/ActionAid

been successful in bringing together education, health and economic justice advocates, it still has to work with women’s rights organisations to include them as partners. Restrictive macroeconomic policies affect women differently from men given their respective economic, social and political roles. Therefore, in developing alternative policies a women’s rights perspective is needed to ensure these new policies benefit women and men equally.

The issues are not as complex as they are often presented. You do not need to be an economist to understand that:

- The low ceiling on the wage bill set by the IMF and the Ministry of Finance means that government cannot hire enough teachers, doctors and nurses.
- IMF conditionalities on the wage bill deny ordinary citizens their right to assess the trade-offs that come with this policy and affect the education of their children and their own well-being.

Economic literacy training in Malawi will not transform education, health and women’s rights advocates into economists. The objective is to raise awareness on an issue that has for too long been discussed in close-door negotiations between the Ministry of Finance and the IMF and that must now be brought into the public domain.

**For more information contact:
julie.juma@actionaid.org**

The impact of non-professional teachers on learning outcomes

by David Archer

Over the past two years ActionAid has been developing a strategic partnership with Education International, the global federation of teachers' unions, and teachers' unions. One of the central issues on which this partnership has been built is concern for the impact of non-professional teachers on the quality of education. In recent years, as a result of pressure on education budgets (not least owing to IMF policies), governments have sought low-cost solutions to increasing teacher numbers, often employing non-professional teachers on a large scale, paying them just a third of the salary of a trained teacher.



Jenny Matthews/ActionAid

The impact of non-professionals on the quality of education and on learning outcomes has yet to be properly documented. The World Bank, which has often supported such programmes, has largely used evidence from small scale programmes run by NGOs, where many other factors are at play (for example, higher per capita spending or close supervision).

This critical issue has been discussed in sub-regional meetings between teachers' unions, education coalitions and ActionAid, first in Nairobi in October 2007 and most recently in Dakar in December 2007. Anecdotally the impact of the large scale use of non-professionals has been very damaging, but the time has come for something more than anecdotes. For this reason, ActionAid is planning some systematic work to document the impact of non-professional teachers in Uganda, Malawi, Burundi and Senegal in 2008. This is part of a new

programme funded by the Hewlett Foundation (channelling funds from the Gates Foundation). This project will also look at the impact of parental involvement on improving learning outcomes in schools.

These new programmes will involve close participation with a wide range of stakeholders, including government departments, teachers' unions, district education officers, teacher training colleges, PTA representatives and local NGOs. Workshops will be held at national and district level (in selected districts) to convene multi-stakeholder teams to do research in a cross section of schools (probably about 30 in each context). Detailed research methodology is being developed across the four countries, who will meet in April 2008 to share and harmonise their approaches.

If you are interested in this approach, have any existing research on this issue, or would like to know more, contact david.archer@actionaid.org

The impact of neo-liberal policies on education in India

by Niraj Seth – based on a study carried out by a team of researchers led by Professor Praveen Jha

In India, education is the responsibility of both the central and the state governments. The right to a free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 is enshrined in the constitution. However, six decades after that was written the goal is still illusive. With more than a billion residents, India has the second largest education system in the world after China. Over third of the population is below 18 years, accounting for nearly a fifth of the world's children. However, according to official figures 35 million of those children are out of school, representing a third of all out-of-school children. The actual figure may be much bigger. It is very likely that India will not achieve the Millennium Development Goal of "universal primary education by 2015". Even for those children in school, the provisions for education are wanting in many aspects and there is growing concern that in the name of education the government is at best providing literacy to a large number of children enrolled in government schools. For example:

1. 140,000 additional upper primary schools are needed in order to achieve a ratio of one upper primary for every primary school.
2. There are 651,381 primary schools with 8,465 schools having no teacher and 97,670 schools only one teacher.
3. Studies show that parents incur 701 rupees (\$18) per annum on out of pocket expenses for the education of their child at the primary level and 1,281 rupees (\$33) per annum for upper primary level. With three quarters of the population earning less than \$200 per annum this is unaffordable for many.
4. There are 500,000 para teachers across the country.

While India is enjoying fast economic growth, it is failing to ensure that the benefits reach all sections of society. The period since the early 1990s, characterized by a strong push to a neo-liberal reforms programme, has fundamentally altered the role of government intervention in the economy and society in India, with far-reaching implications. Like other arenas, the social sector has undergone significant changes, many of which are undesirable.

Unlike many other countries in the developing world, India's experience of neo-liberal economic reforms is not a simple replica of the World Bank and IMF-driven model of stabilization and structural adjustment. This is, to a large extent, on account of substantial opposition to the neo-liberal agenda from several quarters. Nonetheless, since 1991, there has been a rapid and sharp shift in policy regime, which justifies the view of the Indian case as a transition from a state-led development model to a neo-liberal paradigm.

It is not easy to establish direct connections (in terms of diktats, fiats, policy briefs, etc) between the Bretton Woods Institutions and the policies adopted by either the central or the state governments in India, except in the case of loans from these institutions and the attendant conditionalities. Nonetheless, the IMF-World Bank perspective has been very well entrenched in shaping the policies of the central as well as a number of state governments. For instance, in the case of the central government, although political parties heading the government have been tossed around quite a bit by the electorate, the key economic ministries have been headed, almost uninterrupted since the early 1990s by staunch advocates of neo-liberalism. Some key government positions have even been held by ex-personnel of the BWIs.

The key economic ministries have an overwhelming influence in shaping social policies. Although there are reasonably well-laid mechanisms through which the central (or state) government's budgets are formulated and enacted, and democratic discussions are supposed to guide such processes, in reality some are

more equal than others. Thus, the Ministry of Finance has the decisive power and lesser entities like social sector ministries simply have to operate within the constraints imposed. The Ministry of Finance has been on the neo-liberal track since the early 1990s, chugging along slowly at times and racing at others.

Throughout this period, the BWIs have operated, in subtle ways, to ensure that the momentum of this journey does not slacken. It is true that for various reasons, India has had greater elbow room than the majority of developing countries. Nonetheless, significant adverse impacts of neo-liberal macroeconomic policies on education and other social sectors are clear. Given that the attainments in the field of education were among the most disappointing aspects of the pre-reform post-Independence scenario, negative developments during the reform era make the task of addressing educational deficits even more daunting.

Many social sector activities in India, like education and healthcare, are primarily the responsibility of the state governments. The states, however, are dependent on the flow of funds from the centre and this has declined. There have been some low increases in education expenditure by the centre but these have not been enough to compensate for the state's declining expenditure. While budgetary support for elementary education has increased over the last decade, this has been at the cost of support to higher education and secondary education in the country. This is in tune with the policy of the union governments in India, in the recent past, of withdrawing support from the secondary and higher education sectors expecting the private sector to fill the gap.

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act puts an irrational and unwarranted legal ceiling on government deficits. This is particularly inappropriate for a country like India that is burdened with pervasive and deep deficits on various development fronts including education. The Act aims to eliminate the revenue deficit by March 2009 and proposes that the ceiling for the

fiscal deficit, of 3% GDP, be reached by March 2008. The Act also stipulates that the country's central bank cannot lend to its own government, against bonds, beyond March 2006! This patently absurd urge to have legal limits by the government on its own spending is among the cornerstones of the neo-liberal policy programme and is viewed as the litmus test of 'good governance', 'right economic policy' and the like by the BWIs.

According to a recent report by UNESCO, India continues to be in the lowest attainment category, and ranks a low 105 out of the 127 developing countries covered by the study. Such a situation demands vibrant state activism and not adherence to fiscal conservatism. The FRBM Act slams the door in the face of such a possibility and it is difficult to see, in spite of all the good intentions of the newly elected central government as well as several well-meaning governments at the state level, any significant up scaling of expenditure on education.

Recent experience shows that most states are substantially dependent on resources from central government for addressing important gaps in the quality provisioning for elementary education. For instance, appointment of additional teachers implies a substantial recurring expenditure from the state budget, something that most states have come to view as 'irrational' and 'too burdensome'. In the absence of adequate support from the centre, states prefer to recruit teachers on contract basis as a means to reduce the 'financial burden': obviously, such appointments do not entail a recurring burden on the state as teachers are dispensed with every term; also, they are paid much less in comparison to regular teachers.

It is clear that public expenditure needs to be increased in earnest to achieve UPE. With the government's reluctance to increase spending on this crucial sector, coupled with an ever-shrinking amount available to education through centrally-sponsored schemes (CSS), such as Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan or Education for All, attainment of UPE seems an uphill task. Expenditure is mostly

non-plan in nature with little impact on either achieving enrolment and retention or enhancing the quality of education.

In the recent past, most of the major interventions in education, in terms of spending, have been through centrally-sponsored schemes like the midday meal scheme, teacher training, SSA and so on. One of the consequences of the fiscal crisis in states has been an increasing reliance on CSS and the introduction of low cost methods for expanding school facilities such as the appointment of para-teachers. The adoption of low-cost methods is a disturbing trend with a long term impact on the quality of education. At the same time, leaving education to the private sector is not the solution as it is fraught by market risks and also unjustified from the perspective of equity and rights. Further, several findings shared in the report clearly point to there being no truth in the claim that learning is better in private schools.

The World Bank in its 2006 policy review report, *India: Inclusive Growth and Service Delivery: Building on India's Success*, highlights the disturbing trend of the rapid expansion of private schools especially in urban areas. This brings into focus the poor condition of the government schools which is leading people to opt for ill-equipped private schools. Parents thus bear the cost of education. Enrolment is growing in these unrecognized private schools. The World Bank report rightly points out that the growth of private sector services is not because of any official policy or public private partnership but as a result of failing public services, including education.

ActionAid India, therefore, has decided to focus its efforts on strengthening the government school system. Along with our partner organisations we are working to support government schools in all the areas where we operate, at the same time as challenging the system's failures and unfulfilled promises.

**For more information contact:
damodaram.k@actionaidindia.org**

Non-formal primary education: provision for a 'second chance' or violation of human rights?

by Mohammad Muntasim Tanvir

Even though the constitution of Bangladesh assigns the state the responsibility of establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal education system and of extending free and compulsory education to all children, the reality is very different. The role of the state is constantly eroded and the role of NGOs as service providers constantly enhanced, leading to a fragmented education system where poor children receive an accelerated four years of primary education instead of the standard five years received in the government schools. This may help achieve the development goals focusing on 'access' to education, but it violates the right of the child to a quality state education, thereby reducing his or her chances of becoming a useful member in an inclusive society.



Mohammad / AAP/ActionAid

The Bangladeshi model of 'non-formal' primary education pioneered by BRAC, the largest indigenous NGO in the world, has been celebrated through ingenious marketing campaigns and is viewed as a panacea for a government's inability to provide education for its marginalized citizens. However, a careful scrutiny of the evolution of this model reveals that what started as a stopgap measure has gradually eroded government's ability to provide education and has emerged as a parallel system.

Historical backdrop
The idea of non-formal education came out of the need to provide a second chance to adults who never had access to formal schooling. In the Indian subcontinent, the concept of non-formal education first emerged in 1882, in the Hunter Commission Report. In subsequent years, it was used primarily in the context of adult literacy movements. However, in 1974, the first

Education Commission report in Bangladesh came up with formal propositions for NFE, and it was further strengthened in 1993 when a NFE task force was put together. From then on, the focus started to widen to include education for primary school age children. This focus was intensified when the EFA agenda was watered down to UPE, a consequence of the MDG initiatives. Education aid started to flow for primary education, be it formal or non-formal, and it invariably led to NFPE (non-formal primary education), a contentious component of NFE. The thriving NGO sector in Bangladesh became primary recipients of aid in this regard, and NFPE became a booming 'industry'. Now, BRAC alone can claim that some 2.4 million children have graduated from its primary education programmes, a staggering number.

A quick fix?

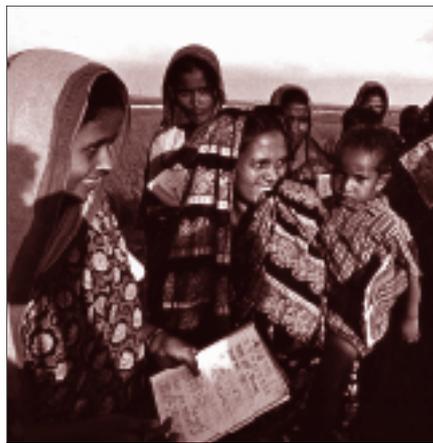
According to the proponents of NFPE, it provides education to marginalized children, giving them a second chance at a successful life. But there has been a marked scarcity of systematic studies and external evaluations to look into what these children have achieved in later life. Usually only a few available case studies/'success stories' of NFPE can be found. One also wonders, what happened to the sacred social contract between the state and the citizen, where the state is responsible for providing primary education? Shouldn't the focus be on

strengthening the government system so that all children can go to formal schools, and NFPE is given its rightful place, a temporary measure? Aren't the children getting a quick fix, as the NFPE model is of only three to four years duration and limited to single room schools with a single teacher but claiming to have the attainments of five-year schooling? Is this system providing the quality of education children are entitled to? Furthermore, this NFPE 'industry' places NGOs in the role of vendors, which has resulted in their losing independence and challenges their role as advocacy and pressure groups. The bureaucratization of projects can result in a loss of the flexibility and local control that are the NGOs' greatest strengths. These are serious concerns, which require serious analysis, leading to serious action.

Now NFPE is extending its reach to Africa. It is following the same pattern as in Asia, with increased aid flow leading to the flourishing of NFPE. So, this particular brand of non-formal primary education (cynically rephrased by its detractors as 'formal non-education') needs to be examined by education activists in Africa also.

International and national policy context

Education is becoming a victim of the relentless global drive for privatization according to the neo-liberal gospel. As the concept of a value-driven welfare state is replaced by a price-driven market system, intermediary institutions are coming between the state and the citizens. The social contract is evolving to ensure its upward accountability towards global capital rather than downward accountability towards the citizen. Both the national and international policy landscapes are reflecting this bleak scenario. Donor commitments towards achievement of the MDGs are not being met, leaving many to look for shortcuts like NFPE. In Africa, Bill Clinton's Global Initiative has committed to raising US\$ 250 million to promote BRAC's model of NFPE. This will make a massive contribution to the



Mehnuza / NAF/ActionAid

Advocates for the right to education like ActionAid, need to take a strong position nationally and internationally to constructively critique the encroachment on the state's role in providing primary education.

dominant paradigm, which denies education as a human right and results in the progressive liberalization of trade in education services instead of the progressive realization of the right to education.

Bangladesh faces similar dismal trends. The PRSP has praised the role of NGOs in education service delivery and encouraged them to increase these efforts. Recently a national NFE policy framework has been developed and put in place to further institutionalize NFPE. PEDP II, the theoretically sector-wide approach, has made no provision for assimilating NFPE students. Furthermore, parallel NFPE projects are being launched without any harmonization plan.

The way forward

Advocates for the right to education like ActionAid, need to take a strong position nationally and internationally to constructively critique the encroachment on the state's role in providing primary education.

Instead of depending on an erratic flow of aid channelled through NGOs to deliver education as charity (without any

accountability to the citizens), there needs to be an emphasis on making government schools work, with strong participation from the community in education governance through bodies like school management committees and parent teachers' associations.

A mass-oriented, pro-poor and inclusive system of education as a state responsibility should be ensured, by making primary education a legal obligation of the state, rather than a political promise precariously dependent on donors and NGOs.

To embark on such a journey to ensure the achievement of EFA goals, synchronized work needs to be done at grassroots, national and international levels:

- **At the grassroots level**, action research and community mobilization should be conducted to collect and promote good practices in state-run schools. A relentlessly negative picture of state-run schools and teachers is often given as if they are beyond redemption and the only solution is NFPE. Such a bleak and one-sided representation should be resisted to give a fair portrayal of state-run education and how it can be improved. Community audits of NFPE interventions should be undertaken to assess the actual benefits of NFPE in a participatory manner.
- **At the national level**, comparative financial and non-financial analysis of NFPE and FPE should be undertaken to develop an assimilation strategy for NFPE schools and students.
- **At the international level**, mapping and analysis of funding of NFPE by international donors should be conducted. Using the findings of local action research and national policy analysis, donors should be encouraged to redirect funding to the formal education system.

Only if such concerted efforts are undertaken, can we hope for an accountable education system that fulfils the right to a quality education for all.

Supporting civil society engagement in education budgets

by Victoria Perry

The Commonwealth Education Fund was established in March 2002 with a focus on promoting civil society input into the Education for All process and raising the profile of international education targets in low-income Commonwealth countries. CEF aimed to increase public debate around the education goals, promote greater transparency in education budgets and focus attention on the needs of children outside the education system. Of particular significance was the portfolio of work around education budgets, enabling citizens to monitor spending on education both at national and local levels. CEF supported partners in 16 countries to empower communities to monitor spending on education at local and national levels.

Why is education budget work important?

Over the last decade, budget work has grown enormously in popularity as a tool for holding government to account at all levels – from the national to the grassroots. The move to political and financial decentralisation in many countries and the strength of pro-democracy and accountability movements have also focused attention on budgets.

By empowering civil society to explore issues related to the education budget, opportunities can be created that allow local people to engage in the big questions of national economic policy.

While a government's budget directly or indirectly affects the life of all its citizens, people with the most modest means are frequently the most greatly affected by budget decisions. In particular, the well-being of those with low incomes, and their future prospects, can hinge on expenditure decisions in areas such as education. Moreover, even when funds have been allocated to pro-poor policies, weak expenditure and programme management – and a lack of political power among the poor – can mean that money does not always reach the intended beneficiaries. Therefore it is important for marginalised groups of people to be able to participate and express their opinion regarding decisions that impact upon them.

Whilst the budget cycle is complex, opportunities exist for civil society to engage at different levels throughout the process. Civil society can work with the government to influence the decision-making

process and final expenditure. It can examine whether this expenditure is disbursed as planned, whether it has the desired impact, and the impact of the budget on different parts of the population. By building capacity in budget analysis, tracking and monitoring, civil society can use the information generated on public expenditure to advocate for their right to education.

CEF-supported budget work CEF has worked to build the confidence of people at the national and local levels to understand and engage on education budgets. This has been done through awareness raising and capacity building around budget analysis, tracking, monitoring and advocacy to enable civil society to participate in education budget processes. As a result of CEF support, education budgets have increasingly been brought under the scrutiny of civil society organisations to ensure they are managed effectively so that government authorities may be held to account.

National level

Across the 16 countries, information about education budgets has been **distributed to over six million individuals** as a direct result of CEF support, and **over 430,000 people have received training** on education budget work. Training has strengthened the position of national coalitions entering into discussions over the budget with the ministry of education, something that has happened in 12 CEF countries. In

nine countries, coalitions have felt confident enough to take these discussions a step further by engaging with the ministry of finance. For many ministries of finance this has been a novelty, as it is the first time they have held informed discussions with civil society groups over the contents of the education budget and been challenged on their own figures.

Work with parliamentary caucuses is now evident in eight countries and has yielded quick results as parliamentarians become more familiar with the issues faced by the education sector in their country, as well as their responsibilities in providing legislative oversight of the education budget. Many partners supported by CEF have questioned macroeconomic policies and their impact upon the education sector, whilst others have challenged donors on the amount of aid allocated to spending on education.

By empowering civil society to explore issues related to the education budget, opportunities can be created that allow local people to engage in the big questions of national economic policy.

In **Bangladesh**, CEF partners challenged claims made by the government that spending on education was increasing by demonstrating instead that there was a declining trend. Their findings were widely cited by the media, putting intense pressure on the government to reverse this trend. In **The Gambia** partners worked to increase parliamentarians' understanding of the education budget and build their capacity to analyse allocations to education. This has made it possible to influence members of the National Select Committee on Education and Training to approve pro-poor activities that meet the aims of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Budget monitoring at the national level in **Malawi** has led to the annual

publication of an Education Budget Monitoring Study, an exercise focused on examining priority poverty expenditure areas. The study is circulated to the government, donors, civil society organisations and the parliament. Findings have been used as an advocacy tool and contributed to an increased budgetary allocation to the education sector.

Local level

Empowering civil society organisations to participate in tracking and monitoring education budgets has led to the confidence of school management committees, parent teacher associations, children, community based organisations and non-governmental organisations to ask questions about budgets at the school, district and national level. In many countries CEF has sought to build the capacity of SMCs by providing them with an understanding of their role in monitoring the judicious use of school finances. CEF **Mozambique** has raised the awareness of SMCs with regards to budget allocations, particularly the Direct Support to Schools initiative. CEF **Nigeria** has successfully lobbied the government to institutionalise SMCs in primary and secondary schools across the country.

In **Uganda**, children have been empowered to track expenditure and assess quality issues associated with education delivery by participating in school-based child-monitoring committees. Children develop action plans for improving the school environment and present these to the SMCs as well as at district and national level policy workshops. As a result of budget tracking work in **Kenya**, more than 50 head teachers were exposed by the media for corruption on the purchase of school textbooks. The Minister of Education issued a directive demanding that all public primary schools display the school budget on the school notice board.

Where budget work has been done in a systematic way at different levels and locations, and when the analysis is used for advocacy, budget work has contributed to

enhancing transparency and accountability in the management of education. As a result of the public expenditure tracking system introduced in **Tanzania**, relevant, detailed and accessible information on expenditure was made publicly available. This has allowed civil society to confidently analyse public expenditure and hold local government to account over their spending. In **Ghana**, there was a marked improvement in education financial management, accountability and transparency at the community and district levels in areas where CEF had supported budget work. Over 70% of participating community schools in the Suhum-Kraboia-Coaltar district began to operate bank accounts and head teachers started to prepare quarterly revenue and expenditure reports.

The challenges of budget work Each stage of the budget cycle contains potential challenges for civil society engagement. While budget-making during the formulation and enactment stages can be highly political, other parts of the budget cycle may be dominated by challenges related to restricted access to information and insufficient capacity to address budget issues effectively.

It is often difficult for civil society to gain entry into the budget cycle. Post budget analysis is generally easier to carry out, but this leaves little opportunity for lobbying. Where there is no legal framework providing a clear role for civil society in the budget process, as in Bangladesh, there is rarely any scope for participation. Moreover, in countries such as Nigeria, the general absence of information on education budgets – particularly in accessible, non-technical forms – seriously hinders the efforts of national and local organisations to participate in discussion on the distribution of education resources. Accessing data remains one of the major challenges in education budget work. Even where it is available at the national level it is invariably inaccessible at the local level, or vice versa.

Lessons from CEF experience

- Budget work can be done by everyone; CEF has supported successful programmes carried out by children and adult learners as well as national NGOs and parliamentarians.
- Budget work is not only about academic analysis, but can also be a popular tool for claiming basic rights. It is an adaptable tool, which can be used in different environments by identifying and exploiting various entry points in the budget process.
- In countries where political opposition is weak, civil society organisations may be the only meaningful challengers to government policy and budgets, and the only credible group able to make demands on government accountability. Civil society participation in the budget process ensures that the perspective and interest of the excluded and marginalised are voiced.
- By analysing spending, and unpacking assumptions about where money will go and who will benefit, gender budgeting can reveal whether a programme is equitable, and can ensure that stated commitments to gender equality are backed up with sufficient budgetary allocations.
- Some governments may feel threatened or affronted by civil society organisations conducting budget work. There is a need to be pro-active in making the case for budget work and building constructive relationships with government officials and head teachers – clearly explaining the potential benefits that come from an improved understanding of the budget by all stakeholders.
- Positions on budgets must be well researched and evidence of any budgetary discrepancies or a misuse of funds entirely robust before being made public.

For more information contact: Jill Hart, jhart@commonwealtheducationfund.org

Education budget tracking at community level

by Andrew Mamedu

The budget is arguably the most important document of every nation after the constitution. It is an essential tool for planning, economic development, socialisation, political, legal and other purposes. Budget tracking can be defined as the process of monitoring the stages of preparing, approving and implementing the national budget for the purpose of ensuring that the budget is people-centred and gender sensitive, as well as to ensure accountability and improve government responsiveness. Education budget tracking involves looking at how the national budget is linked to the education sector, especially at grassroots level.

In Nigeria, the Commonwealth Education Fund is working with local partners, the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All and the Nigerian Union of Teachers, to spearhead education budget tracking at national, state and local levels.

A local focus

Nigeria operates a federal system of government. Under its revenue allocation process, the state and local governments receive 26.7% and 20.6% respectively from the federation account. Although the federal government contributes some funding, primary and secondary education are the responsibility mainly of the state and local governments. It is clear that if Education for All is to be achieved, then the state and local governments have a key role to play and local budget tracking is vital.

When the CEF budget tracking work started in 2003, the biggest challenge was getting access to government documents. At the time, government budgets were seen as top secret documents which should only be seen by a few government officials. According to one of the participants in our very first budget tracking training:

“When you ask for a government budget even as a government official with no direct link with the budget, it is as if you have committed sacrilege”.

As the work progressed, another hurdle that we had to overcome was to get local people to take an interest in the budget and understand how it links with and impacts on their own lives. Two weeks of intensive training on budget appreciation and budget tracking saw local organisations and community members appreciating the budget and engaging with it. This

led to them formally requesting their local budget, analysing it and asking questions in order to better understand it. The training also gave ideas on how community members can engage with local government officials on budgetary issues.

Stakeholder committees

Following this, All Stakeholders' Committees (ASCs) were formed in selected local government areas. The committees are made up of representatives from youth organisations, women's organisations, traditional leaders, government, market women's associations, teachers' unions, civil society organisations and community development committees. The ASCs have three key areas of work:

- To **ensure the adequacy of the education budget** in relation to the needs of the communities as well as related national and international benchmarks and targets.
- To **monitor expenditure** in relation to budgetary allocation. This is a particular problem in Nigeria, as it is not unusual to find that budgets have not been completely used by the end of the budget period. In some cases, only 40% of the capital budget would have been spent by the end of the financial year. In 2005, the President decreed that the 2005 budget would not be touched until the 2004 budget was completely spent. It took to June

2005 for the 2004 federal capital budget to be exhausted. In one case, a local ASC discovered that a particular budget heading, scholarship, had consistently appeared on the local government budget for five years without ever being spent. Following a meeting between the ASC and local government officials, scholarships were given to 50 children for secondary schooling.

- To **ensure value for money**. The ASCs analyse the education budget and conduct field visits to ensure that major projects that have been budgeted for have actually been executed. They also perform quality tests to ensure that recommended standards are being met. In cases where these are not satisfactory, the ASC will bring this to the attention of the relevant local authority and if action is not taken at this stage they would move into the 'whistle blowing' stage; holding press conferences to alert the media of any impropriety, or carrying out advocacy visits to present their findings to high-level government officials.

Over the years, our work with the communities has grown from appreciating the budget, to actually going to the field to analyse and track the budget. Many of the communities are currently at the 'whistle blowing' phase and are bringing a lot of media attention to the findings of their work. They are working hand-in-hand with anti-corruption authorities to curb corruption in the education sector at community level.

The budget tracking work has resulted in a significant increase in resources allocated to education over the last three years and an increase in the total amount spent on education. There is also an observed increase in transparency in local governance as most of the ASCs are now involved in the budget process.

**For more information contact:
andrew.mamedu@actionaid.org**

UN award for ActionAid's disaster reduction work

by John Abuya

In October 2007, ActionAid's work in disaster risk reduction (DRR) was recognised with a certificate of distinction in the prestigious UN Sasakawa Awards. The lynchpin of this work is the Disaster Risk Reduction through Schools project, which began in October 2005. This five-year multi-country project, which is set to reach over three million people in seven countries, seeks to reduce the risk of disasters using schools as centres for disaster prevention and mitigation. The project is based around the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, an international agreement signed by 168 countries in 2005 after the Tsunami killed over 250,000 people in Asia and Africa.

The Sasakawa prize acts as an incentive for environmental efforts that are sustainable and replicable in the long term. It recognises "innovation, groundbreaking research and ideas, and extraordinary grassroots initiatives from around the world." The news of the award was received with great pride across the organisation. The news read in part:



Chileon Mendel/Cortis/ActionAid

2007 Sasakawa Award:

Certificate of Distinction awarded to ActionAid
The Sasakawa Jury has selected for a Certificate of Distinction, ActionAid International... They have played a pioneering role in incorporating disaster risk reduction into their national, sub-national, sectoral and community initiatives and have facilitated the development and introduction of the Hyogo Framework as a component of these efforts at moving societies toward inclusive, integrated strategies and plans for achieving sustainable development in the near future. The work of ActionAid International related to DRR and their strategies, methods, tools and lessons learnt related to sustainability has been generously shared and widely diffused to a global audience through a variety of modalities.



Chris Steele-Feltham/Magnuny/ActionAid

The Award is attributed to the following special achievements during this initial period of implementation:

1. **General disaster risk reduction activities to reduce the socio-economic impact of disasters and contribute to sustainable development:**

The instrumental role of ActionAid in building the bridges between DRR and development through programme and policy work was acknowledged. Within ActionAid's rights-based approach, the DRR projects are focused on building the capacities of local communities to analyse their own vulnerability and take action to reduce risk.

What makes ActionAid's approach to disaster risk reduction innovative is the emphasis on the importance of community-driven advocacy for change. For risk reduction to work on a national scale, successful risk reduction on a local level must be understood by those with the power to scale this up. This is our major focus.

2. **Ensuring communities are organized around schools for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction:**

Globally, activities include the establishment of disaster management committees within schools and in their local communities. These committees are trained in specific skills such as first aid, search and rescue, and risk reduction activities like developing dykes, elevated housing and sanitation.

In **Ghana**, for example, ActionAid has been instrumental in bringing together key individuals and institutions in a collaborative effort to reduce disaster risk on a national scale. Ghana's National Disaster Management Organisation, Education Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, National Fire Service and the core staff of the District Assemblies came together to agree the core objectives of the work and to raise the profile of DRR and the Hyogo Framework for Action. Radio was

used to publicise the project and other related issues. Other examples of community-level organisation include natural resource management clubs in **Malawi** and the creation of emergency funds by disaster management committees in **Nepal**

3. **Making schools physically and structurally safer in high-risk disaster areas :**

Innovative approaches to making schools structurally safer are emerging across the countries. All these have arisen from PVA action plans at school and community level. For example, stakeholder forums on building codes and the physical location of schools have been formed in **Nepal** and **Bangladesh**.

ActionAid Bangladesh has supported structural improvements in three 'model' schools in high risk areas in Kurigram (north) and Patuakhali (south) Districts. Kurigram District is exposed to multiple hazards, such as flooding and river erosion. Cyclone shelters in Char Bangla village and safe water supply for Eight Unions (the smallest administrative unit of Bangladesh) have increased the resilience of several communities to future disasters. Climate change awareness campaigns, involving activities such as essay competitions, have been carried out among children and communities. Emergency drills have been carried out for children so they know what to do in case of flooding, cyclones and earthquakes. This has reached all 29 schools in the roll-out. Students and teachers from these core schools have become champions of preparedness and risk reduction in their local communities.

In **Malawi**, natural resource management clubs have been formed. Through these, communities and school children have organised themselves to dredge the Thangadzi River that perennially overflows causing flooding and destruction. School children are also engaged in tree planting and constructing earth bunds around schools to reduce

the impact of flood water. In **Nepal**, ActionAid works with partners such as the Nepali National Society for Earthquake Technologies to disseminate disaster education and knowledge, as well as with a variety of education and teachers' networks to reach out to communities and schools. Nepal is advocating for improved schools' facilities and enforcement of building codes, and is working with the national curriculum development centre to integrate DRR education into the school curriculum.

4. **Developing effective and replicable methods that enable schools to be a focus for district-wide work on disaster awareness and disaster risk reduction :**

Effective methods are seen around two axes namely; schools as centres for community DRR initiatives; and schools as centres for pedagogical aspects of DRR.

At the heart of ActionAid's approach to disaster risk reduction is Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA) – an effective tool that enables field workers to identify vulnerability and design social activities that will reduce risk. Ideas that come out of these PVA exercises, include kids' clubs and community events that bring together teachers, parents and students to 'talk' local hazards.

In **Bangladesh, Malawi** and **India** we see innovative use of songs, drama and drills to create awareness. Child-to-child learning methods are being employed in **Nepal**, while in India resource teachers have been identified to teach preparedness and behaviour during disasters.

5. **Ensuring national and international level policy and practice are influenced by local examples of excellence in disaster risk reduction through schools:**

At national level, our project has facilitated policy advocacy forums and debates across the different countries. The value ActionAid is adding to this process is by identifying strategic local champions of DRR and building

their capacity and networks. For example in **Nepal**, using national forums, ActionAid is aiming to influence the national development plan, drawing from local-scale learning. Already we have seen that disaster planners in national government have understood that disaster risk reduction must be considered in long-term development plans if the MDG targets are to be achieved. With the knowledge that lasting change is only possible through policy change nationally in Nepal, ActionAid has formed a coalition with like-minded people's organisations to make sure the interests of the most vulnerable Nepali people are heard by decision makers. In **Bangladesh**, an 'urban vulnerability atlas' has been developed both as a tool for planning and for risk reduction advocacy. ActionAid has been active in the lobby for national platforms in line with commitments made in HFA, and through such efforts **the national DRR platform in Malawi** is due to be launched in December 2007. Nepal is engaged with influencing curriculum development with the Centre for Curriculum Development and Kenya is beginning to make in-roads in working with teachers' unions.

At international level,

ActionAid has been a major contributor to the development and promotion of the Hyogo Framework for Action since its inception in Kobe. As a member of the UNISDR platform on Knowledge and Education and of the Management Oversight Group, we have been a leading practitioner and advocate of the crucial role schools, education ministries and children themselves have in reducing disaster risk. As part of this work, ActionAid commissioned a review of the role of education and knowledge in disaster risk reduction entitled '*Let our children teach us*'. We have been an active campaigner for linking the fields of DRR and adaptation to climate change. '*Unjust Waters*', ActionAid's study of the impact of climate change on

the urban poor in Africa, has been widely commended as a new and refreshing angle on the growing body of research in the field. The study focused on capturing existing knowledge within communities on climate change adaptation, and bringing the need for funding to the attention of donor nations.

ActionAid is a member of the UK BOND group of agencies working on disaster risk reduction. We have held successful events at key international conferences, such as the Third International Conference on Early Warning, held in Bonn under the auspices of the UN. Out of this we produced a user-friendly document entitled, *10 essential ingredients for successful people-centred early warning systems*.

ActionAid and UN/ISDR Africa co-hosted a side event at the World Social Forum 2007 with UN/ISDR secretariat in Nairobi and brought in four children from rural Malawi and Kenya to give testimonies on the impact of disaster in their schools, communities and on their education. The testimonies also aimed to give key messages on the Hyogo Framework through the eyes of the child – an example of reaching new audiences with DRR messages.

Proposal for the Sasakawa Award funds

ActionAid is currently looking at how our disaster risk reduction through schools work can act as a catalyst for helping local communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. We believe schools can play a key role in transmitting messages of safety, risk reduction and adaptation strategies. With the prize money from the Sasakawa Award, ActionAid will trial an innovative project to integrate climate change adaptation into existing disaster reduction initiatives.

For more information on the project please contact:
john.abuya@actionaid.org
To see the publications mentioned above, visit www.actionaid.org

Communities working towards EFA: school management committees in Ghana

by Dorothy Konadu

Local communities in Ghana have always played a vital role in the development and provision of education and in the past many of the basic schools were community initiated and managed; they provided the learning space, recruited teachers and supervised retention and attainment. When management and control was taken over by government authorities, community participation and involvement in managing quality and access in education was lost.



Gideon Mendiell/Corbis/ActionAid

When the Ghana Education Service structure was reviewed in 1994, school management committees were set up in order to strengthen community participation in education. The committees included the head of school, the District Director of Education, representatives of the District Assembly, Unit Committee, Educational Unit and traditional rulers, as well as two members of staff and some co-opted members for specific functions. Obviously, if they were working effectively then ActionAid Ghana could not find a better ally in promoting participation, transparency and accountability in education. There was however a difficulty as many SMC members lacked the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

ActionAid is providing training for members of SMCs and parent teacher associations across Ghana, leading to greater community involvement and improved management of schools. The setting up of federations has helped increase the confidence of SMC and PTA members to participate in school management. Some SMCs have produced constitutions to

guide their operations and to make them more democratic and accountable. Some have also established sub-groups such as enrolment committees, whose main focus is to ensure the enrolment of all children within their catchment area and ensure a reduction in drop-out rates. They are able to engage persistently on educational issues with government. Strengthened and emboldened, they are able to call for explanations from school authorities on issues such as education budgets, teacher shortages, school attendance and drop out rates and the school meals programme.

Accountability forums organised by SMCs and communities have made it possible for community members to monitor and ensure quality implementation of education policies and to help increase enrolment and retention. For example, ActionAid's capacity building for SMCs and PTAs has led to increased understanding of the Capitation Grant, a government initiative intended to eliminate all forms of fees and levies to enable all children to attend school. Some SMCs and

PTAs have enacted and enforced by-laws against socio-cultural practices that deny girls access to continuing education. Both these activities have helped to increase enrolment in schools. Another example of the demonstration of their effectiveness is where an SMC/PTA federated body followed up with the District Assembly to ensure that promised budgetary allocations for the building of additional classrooms in their communities were fulfilled and the projects carried out. In a further initiative, as a result of regular reflections by SMC/PTAs on the school meals programme and its local impact, farmers' networks in some areas have demanded more openness, accountability and efficient use of local resources in the programme.

Women's participation

A lot of effort has been made to ensure the inclusion and active participation of women in these processes. In some areas women's support to activities aimed at ensuring quality education delivery is gaining ground but many others still struggle with this. This is how an elderly male PTA member, described the involvement of women in the programme after one of our training workshops:

"Before the workshop I was against the idea of involving women in school matters. All the time we men took decisions and just informed the women. No wonder that all the by-laws we men enacted preventing school children from attending video shows in the night failed to yield positive results. We did not involve the women in the decision-making so they did not assist in any way to influence their children to stay at home to study.

Now that we have learnt that it is essential to involve women in decision-making we will do so in order to see a vibrant SMC/PTA which will mobilize demand for quality education for our children. After all, children listen to their mothers more than their fathers."

Future challenges

Though community participation in school management has improved, a lot remains to be done. Challenges include the high turnover of SMC/PTA membership, which results in a loss of skills and knowledge; the low participation of women, especially in leadership; poor infrastructure development and harsh living conditions which make it difficult to retain teachers; inadequate funding for projects such as building libraries, recreational facilities, toilets, teachers accommodation, and installing electricity. There is also the problem of over-zealousness on the part of some SMC members who try to become school inspectors, thus creating tension between SMCs and school authorities.

A lot of effort has been made to ensure the inclusion and active participation of women in these processes. In some areas women's support to activities aimed at ensuring quality education delivery is gaining ground but many others still struggle with this.

The successes achieved so far through ActionAid's collaboration with SMCs and PTAs are evidence of the importance of community participation in the provision of quality education. When SMCs work well, and communities have a say in the education of their children, school governance is greatly improved and that constitutes one huge leap towards the provision of quality education. It is only when the partnership between the school and community is vibrant that we can be sure of making gains in our march towards attaining education for all.

Children's clubs: a forum for children's active participation as change agents

by Latika Maskey Pradhan

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has legitimized the participation of children in making decisions that affect them. For children, 'participation' brings together the rights within the Convention, including the right to information and the right to be heard and express themselves. In Nepal, children's clubs are creating a space for children's meaningful participation in the development process and enabling them to take a constructive role in building their own community and society.

While the government and many development actors are struggling to address issues affecting children's right to education in Nepal, the children's clubs have in a small way started to act as agents of change in society. The children's involvement in such clubs has produced amazing results. Highlighting issues such as gender- or caste-based discrimination, promoting school as a zone of peace, campaigning for school enrolment, and conducting health and sanitation campaigns are some of the activities undertaken by the children's clubs in districts across Nepal. The children's clubs have evolved as a forum for children to learn as well as to generate awareness on children's rights. Children's clubs organize activities such as painting competitions, debates, street dramas and writing competitions on a regular basis to highlight children's rights issues.

The setting up of a children's club begins with discussions with community members, parents and children on issues of education rights. Each club is set up in an inclusive process involving all concerned, the parents and children then form an informal committee to register members. The clubs are registered with the Central Child Welfare Board, which keeps records of all the clubs. Children's clubs consist of children from the



A children's club in Sarlahi conducting a door-to-door rally for school enrolment

same community with an executive committee responsible for organizing the clubs activities. ActionAid Nepal is supporting clubs in seven districts but the remaining 45 districts all have child-focused programmes that support children's clubs.

An assistant head of a secondary school in Sarlahi district, who has been observing the activities of children's clubs in the district, says that children in his village have played a very important role in generating awareness among communities on many issues:

"Instead of parents guiding their children, children are actually leading their parents in the path for positive change".

Children indeed have been agents of change in various parts of Nepal. In Baglung district, when two teachers in a cooking class refused to taste the dish cooked by a Dalit child, the children protested and informed the media and police. As a result both media and police went to the scene and the teachers were made to apologize and pay a fine. In Terai district, a child managed to stop his under-age sister being forced into marriage. These actions are a reflection of empowerment.

The empowerment is reflected in children's own words. Manoj Paswan, age 15, has been actively involved in coordinating street dramas and other awareness programmes as a president of Unnati Bal club in Sarlahi district.

He says:

"I have gained confidence to talk about children's issues in front of any one now. I want to work against caste-based discrimination in our society through our children's club."

According to Deepen BK from Dharan in Sunsari district:

"The Children's Club network was successful in campaigning against user fees in Sunsari district. At first when we started the club, parents were hesitant to send their children for club meetings but now parents listen to what the children's club has to say. What's more, school management committees have started to invite us to their regular meetings."

Deepen joined the Kopila Bal Samuha when he was in class four at the age of nine. Orphaned at the age of seven, he's looked after by his uncle. He has now become the president of the district-level children's club network that brings together 300 children's clubs from all over Sunsari district.

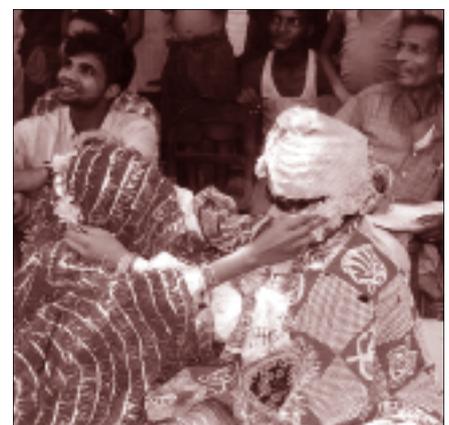
Other children have expressed similar sentiments. In Kapilvastu district, children's clubs held a children's parliament and invited key government bodies to take part in the debate on children's rights issues in the district. The return of the child support fund that annually comes to the child welfare district committee was widely criticized by the children's clubs, as many children

needed support but the fund was not used. The children in the club say:

"After we joined the children's club and carried out these activities, even the District Education Officers and other agency heads recognise us and ask us if we need any support from them. We have gained enough confidence to voice our issues these days."

The children's clubs have evolved as a forum for children to learn as well as to generate awareness on children's rights.

During the 10-year period of conflict in Nepal, children's clubs have been instrumental in spreading the message of peace through regular newspapers, painting competitions and street dramas. Children have helped to create a wider awareness of peace processes in their communities. Rebuilding a country starts from rebuilding a family and a community and children play a fundamental role in this process. Children have become agents of change in many Nepali communities where social transformation is needed to establish equal rights for all.



Children perform a street drama against child marriage, Sarlahi district.

For more information contact:
basanta.pokharel@actionaid.org

Global Campaign for Education 2007 campaigners JOIN UP for Education Rights Now!

by Alex Kent & Muleya Mwananyanda

At the midway point to the Education for All deadline, 2007 was a busy year for the Global Campaign for Education. No half-hearted efforts were made in reminding world leaders of their commitments. Once again Global Action Week united children, unions, teachers, activists, parents, NGOs, and community groups for one week around the world on the anniversary of the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar (where the EFA targets were set). From 24–30 April civil society united at a national level in over 100 countries, and campaigned for education rights.

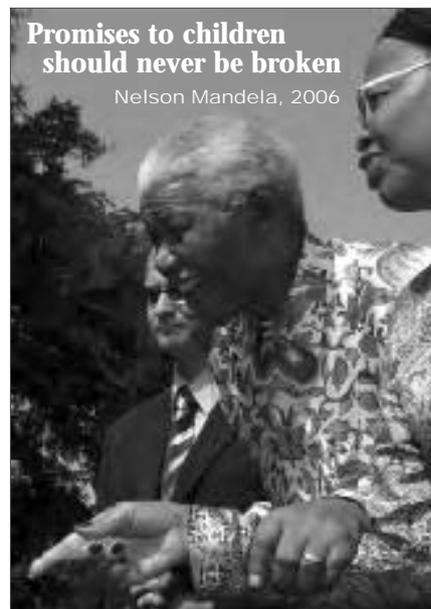
The Global Campaign for Education's Action Weeks to date:

- 2003 **Two million people took part in Girls' Education: the World's Biggest Lesson.**
- 2004 **Two and a half million people took part in the World's Biggest Lobby.**
- 2005 **Five million people asked for Education to End Poverty by posting paper cut-out 'friends' to leaders, demanding Send My Friend Back to School.**
- 2006 **Five and a half million held Big Hearings and demanded Every Child Needs a Teacher .**
- 2007 **Numbers are still coming in – so far five million have Joined-Up and formed the world's longest chain demanding Education Rights Now!**
- 2008 **Campaigners are inviting their leaders Back to School to participate in breaking the record for the World's Biggest Lesson.**

JOIN UP! Education Rights Now!

At the midway point to the EFA deadline, GCE campaigners decided to argue for a holistic approach to achieving EFA, on education as a human right that is essential for enabling individuals to be able to exercise all other rights, as enshrined in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights.

To maximize attention to this issue, campaigners around the world took the time to JOIN UP!, making people chains, paper chains and online chains. Standing side-by-side campaigners protested about the lack of fast and effective progress towards realizing the Education for All goals, and put their demands for fast, real action to governments and international institutions.



Highlight events throughout Global Action Week included:

- In **Argentina** children and teachers gave giant *abrazos* (hugs) to their schools in all provinces, politicians went 'back to school' to hear the students demands.
- 1.2 million people united in **Bangladesh** as part of the JOIN UP! events
- 62,000 people took part in **Brazil** and asked the government to put greater funds into education – paying for teacher's wages, books, school equipment and other materials.
- The **Democratic Republic of Congo's** People's Palace was swamped with campaigners as they formed a people chain around the building and put across their demands for quality education.
- In **Denmark** 185,000 students took part in Action Week and read the Reading Rocket – a book about education produced every year by famous Danish authors, as part of Action Week activities. Children then gave their cut-out chains to the Danish Minister of Development, Ulla Tornaes.
- In **Germany** campaigners gathered in Berlin and handed cut-out chains to a puppet Merkel.
- **Guatemala** hosted a music festival for education rights.
- Global Action Week events in

- **Nepal** included an enrolment campaign in which thousands of new students started school.
- In the **Netherlands** hundreds of children and the Princess Laurentien JOINED UP and handed a giant inflatable globe along the chain that demanded Education Rights for All.
- In **Niger** thousands of pupils and the popular rap group Kaidean Gaskya and Hadiza Mangou took part in a massive chain in the General Seyni Kountche Stadium, where they handed their demands to correct the violations against the right to education up along the chain to the Minister of Education.
- In **Pakistan** 45,000 signatures were collected and presented to the government for free good quality education for all.
- In **Senegal** and **The Gambia** 3,000 campaigners went the extra length, as they JOINED UP across the border at the busy Kerr gate.
- In **Somalia** 800 teachers and thousands of children and students attended a JOIN UP day asking the government to provide free compulsory education for all school children.
- In **Spain** 715 schools took part,

and met with more than 100 politicians for the right to education.

- In the **USA** schools in over 40 states took part and LINKED UP – some of the remarkable youngest advocates come to Washington to take part in as many as 50 briefings to officials at Congress.

Campaigners go to Europe
The Global Action Week was not the only high profile education campaigning event in 2007. Campaigners met with their MEPs in the European Parliament, in January to form the first JOIN UP for education rights in 2007. Other young campaigners returned to Brussels in May, during the donor meeting on education. Six young children from around the world stood up in front of Louis Michel, Gordon Brown, Paul Wolfowitz and other officials to tell their stories and demand education for everyone. Among them was young Kinsu Kumar, from

India, who until recently was unable to go to school. He washed cars to make small money for the family until he was helped to go to school. Alongside his friends, Kinsu asked for more aid for education so that all children have the chance to realise their dreams.

The Education for All High Level Group meeting was held in Dakar at the end of 2007. Children marched to the conference to demand their rights and the first ever *Global School Report* was launched (see page 42). This unique report, which ranks every country in terms of the progress they have made in reaching the Education for All goals, will serve as a lobbying and campaigning tool for education activists world wide.



Chrysta Panousiadiou / Impact / ActionAid

2008 – Campaigners will teach politicians in the World’s Biggest Lesson!

The Global Campaign for Education will unite at the beginning of 2008 in the next World Assembly, a unique meeting of national education coalitions that only takes place every three years. The meeting, to be held in Sao Paulo from 22-24 January 2008, will be crucial for determining the future direction of the campaign. **To find out more please contact yunus@campaignforeducation.org**

The next Action Week is planned for 21–28 April 2008, during which children, teachers and adults will come together to put on the World’s Biggest Lesson, which hopes to teach politicians and journalists one of the most important lessons of their life.

“We all know the power of education to give a real start in life and to develop the full potential of every single human being, to fight poverty, to fight diseases, to fight ignorance and to fight HIV/AIDS.”

**Graça Machel,
GCE spokesperson 2007.**

The theme of the World’s Biggest Lesson is *Quality Education for All: End Exclusion Now!* The theme is apt considering there are so many people who for various reasons have been denied an education. There is also a growing demand for access to be coupled with quality and relevant education for all.

The World’s Biggest Lesson will be run by campaigners and children, who will invite politicians and

journalists *Back to School* to take part in the record-breaking attempt of having the most number of people taking the same lesson at one time. Children and learners will be taught a lesson on the need for quality education for all and an end to exclusion. Alongside the global lesson plan, each lesson will present detailed evidence of what’s needed at a local level to make sure all marginalized people are included. Evidence will include stories, research and maps, indicating where governments should concentrate their efforts.

All these efforts will highlight the urgent action that is needed to achieve the Education for All goals in seven years time. Although progress has been made in recent years, the world is currently so far off track that the goals will not be met by 2115, let alone 2015.

Quality Education for All is fundamental to ensuring that people of all ages are able to develop their full capacities.

All governments must:

- Reiterate their commitment to promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equal access to quality education.
- Make particular efforts to rectify inequalities relating to social and economic conditions without distinction as to race, national origin, gender, age, or disability.
- Proactively combat segregation, discrimination and other exclusionary policies and practices and recognize and respect the rights of all, especially women, children, people with disabilities, people living in poverty and those belonging to disadvantaged groups.

Rich country governments must:

- Increase total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to at least \$16 billion per year, ensuring that 60 low-income countries' plans are fully funded through the Education For All Fast-Track Initiative.
- Guarantee that ODA is predictable over a ten-year period.
- Fund countries' full Education for All strategies, through harmonised sector or budget support to ensure that cash can be spent on core recurrent costs such as teacher salaries.
- Specifically commit some of the resources to financing social protection for poor and marginalized families.
- Encourage the development of inclusive education strategies in dialogue with partner countries which will achieve a quality education for all.
- Develop innovative financing mechanisms to fund public education provision in conflict-affected fragile states.

Poor country governments should:

- Ensure that 20% of national budgets and 6% of GNI are allocated to education.
- Include specific measures to reach marginalised and excluded learners such as orphans and vulnerable children, ethnic and language minorities, children with disabilities, children in internally-displaced and refugee communities and working children.
- Introduce policies and practices to achieve gender equality in education, such as gender-sensitive curricula, ensuring an adequate number of female teachers, making schools safe and hygienic for girls and giving stipends for girls.
- Abolish all fees and charges in education.
- Include specific measures to improve the quality of education such as ensuring that all children are taught in a class no bigger than 40 by a professionally-trained teacher, spending at least 25% of recurrent budgets on non-salary quality inputs such as teaching and learning materials and enshrining the right to nine years of education in national law.

International institutions should:

- The EFA Fast-Track Initiative should publicly state that country plans addressing the full EFA agenda are eligible for approval and financing through the initiative.
- The World Bank should ensure that its lending is aligned with the EFA-FTI principles of supporting one country, one sector, one plan.
- The IMF should drop fiscal policies such as the imposition of public sector wage caps, which prevent countries from increasing domestic spending on Education For All.
- The UN should use its mandate under Special Procedures to prioritise action on education and take concrete steps to urge member states to do the same.

The theme of the World's Biggest Lesson is *Quality Education for All: End Exclusion Now!* The theme is apt considering there are so many people who for various reasons have been denied an education. There is also a growing demand for access to be coupled with quality and relevant education for all.

How to Take Part in the WORLD'S BIGGEST LESSON on the 23 April 2008:

- 1 Invite your local politicians, any VIPs or anyone you want to influence to go BACK TO SCHOOL and take part in the World's Biggest Lesson.
- 2 Collect all the promises that your politicians have made on education over the years.
- 3 Find out what you want your politicians to do about Quality Education.
- 4 Present all these promises and findings to our politicians as part of the World's Biggest Lesson.
- 5 Find what's happening in your country by visiting www.campaignforeducation.org

Together we'll make this a lesson to remember.

Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education

by Camilla Crosso-Silva

In a region marked by social and educational inequality, where processes that generate poverty and all forms of exclusion are maintained and even exacerbated, civil society movements such as the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) have a crucial role to play. It is worth remembering that the region has an estimated 35 million adults who cannot read or write and 88 million who have not completed primary education. If the average illiteracy rate in the region is 10.3%, in Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua the percentage doubles, in Guatemala it trebles and in Haiti, half of the population is illiterate. In the 3-18 age group, 35 million children and adolescents in Latin America do not have access to education.

This year, CLADE has dedicated important efforts to changing this scenario. First, it attended all meetings which brought together ministers of education from the region, to raise its voice in favour of the provision of education as a human right, increasing State investment in education and the increase of civil society participation in the definition and monitoring of education public policies. In the main regional EFA midterm review meeting in March, the Campaign succeeded in adding a reference to the final recommendations document, regarding the role of civil society in policy discussions and definition.

It is no coincidence that the three above mentioned issues were thoroughly voiced in all regional meetings: they were selected during the Assembly of the Latin American Campaign early this year, as its priority issues for the next two years. They are the focal areas around which the CLADE agenda and strategic framework have been developed.

In pursuing its first priority, defending education as a human right, the Campaign started off by carrying out a study looking at the new education legislation passed in the region since 2000. It found that in this post-Dakar period, the legislation does in fact show important progress compared to the previous reform period during the 90s.

The new legal frameworks stand on the assumption that education is a human right and have overall a more holistic approach towards education. They also recognize civil society as an important political actor. Unfortunately what is understood as civil society participation is left vague, allowing for different interpretations on

The region has an estimated 35 million adults who cannot read or write and 88 million who have not completed primary education.

issues such as cost sharing and the implementation of programmes and policies which should be exclusively the responsibility of the State. One problem is that many of the new frameworks allow space for and invite so-called alternative forms of financing education, without specifying what is understood by this and what are the limits of non-State investment. Civil society organisations committed to education as a right must therefore actively monitor how these legal frameworks play out in concrete policies and programmes.

These findings are compiled in a publication which was launched at the end of November 2007 in Argentina. This study paves the way for a more process-oriented justiciability strategy to be carried out in 2008, in alliance with the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Education and other key institutional allies with experience in litigating cases of rights violations in regional and international forums, such as the Inter-American Court.

In terms of its second priority,

In the 3-18 age group, 35 million children and adolescents in Latin America do not have access to education.

increasing and improving State investment in education, CLADE has operated on several fronts; because privatization of education is a growing reality in the region, it has commissioned a case study on Chile, seeking to understand the nuances and complexities of such processes. This is important in raising awareness and fostering concrete action across the 18 national forums linked to CLADE. It also feeds into the monitoring and intervention programmes that the Campaign wishes to carry out on World Bank lending across the region and on how countries position themselves in trade agreements, such as GATS.

The Campaign has also initiated an interesting process regarding the definition of a so called Regional 'Quality Student Investment' which will examine what should be an appropriate investment per student if we wish to guarantee quality education for all. In the region, Brazil has a broad experience in defining such quality investment as do, to a lesser degree, Peru and Columbia. It is worth noting that important regional political actors, such as UNESCO's regional office, have already shown keen interest in advancing this concept.

Adult education

Apart from action around these priorities, CLADE has also carried out efforts in other areas, such as adult literacy. In September 2007, the campaign launched a special initiative on the issue which involved carrying out interviews, commissioning articles, systematising data, all of which were presented on the Campaign's website. In addition, in September 2007, a position paper was sent to all Latin American ministers of education, demanding further



attention, resources, policies and programmes for adult education.

Finally, CLADE has put a lot of energy into articulating the voices of 18 national forums, fostering common debate, exchange of experiences and learning processes, and the maintenance of a regional space of action and debate. Face-to-face meetings, constant consultation processes and information sharing, the Global Action Week as well as frequently updating the Campaign website, are strategies that contributed to this. Many important advocacy experiences were also carried out at the national level, as can be seen below.

Mexico:

Incidencia Civil por la Educación developed and handed over to the Public Education Office a document entitled Citizens' Proposal for the National Education Programme 2007-2012. The objective is to inform education public policies from a civil society perspective.

Ecuador:

Contrato Social por la Educación developed a proposal for a law that marks the beginning of safe and integrated financing of the education sector in Ecuador, on the basis of allocating education resources from a specific tax. Contrato Social hopes that this can pave the way for a minimum allocation of 6% of GDP to education.

Argentina:

The Argentinian Campaign for the Right to Education is pressuring the government, and specifically the president of the Federal Education Council, to speedily put together the councils foreseen by the new National Education Law. This was the result of a long process involving broad social participation.

Brazil:

The Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education is celebrating the approval of the National Fund for Education; the result of a law that amends the Constitution and that relates to the whole of Basic Education. The Brazilian Campaign greatly influenced the improvement of the Law and has recently received a prize in National Congress in recognition of its important advocacy work around this law.

2008 is a promising year, beginning with important regional participation in the World Assembly of the Global Campaign for Education, with the launch of the regional School Report Card and with many more initiatives geared to making reality the right to education for all.

For more information, please visit
www.campanaderechoeducacion.org

The Second ActionAid International Global Education Meeting: Consolidating education work in ActionAid

by Balaraba Aliyu

The Second ActionAid International Global Education Meeting brought the organisation's education constituency together to review the implementation of ActionAid's education strategy over the past two years, since the first meeting in 2005. Over 50 participants attended the meeting, which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2007. Participants included education representatives from 20 ActionAid countries, as well as representatives from other thematic teams and key education partners from around the world. The objectives of the meeting were:

- **To exchange experiences around the implementation of ActionAid's education strategy, looking at successes, challenges and future directions.**
- **To deepen our understanding of key education issues.**
- **To seek balance and connections between local, national and international work.**
- **To forge links and strengthen relationships within the global education network.**

Such an assembling of education practitioners from diverse backgrounds and locations provided ample opportunities for sharing innovative practices. A daily gallery walk provided space for participants to showcase education initiatives being implemented around the world, ranging from *Reflect* work in Vietnam to post-conflict education work in Liberia. In this way, many participants were able to identify tangible areas in which cross-country collaborations and learning initiatives could be arranged.

The participants spent some time reviewing the new pack, *Education rights pack: A guide for practitioners and activists*, which was released early this year (see page 43). As the pack is framed around ActionAid's education strategy, this gave participants the opportunity to consider their work in relation to the strategy and to the rights-based approach to education. They were able to share different ways in which it had been useful in their work at local and national levels and to develop strategies for its further dissemination

There was also an opportunity to discuss key policy issues affecting education work in ActionAid. Both in implementing our strategy and for the achievement of EFA goals, collaboration with national education coalitions and teachers' unions is essential. Participants were able to share their experiences of working with these key partners and develop strategies to counter the challenges and controversies that were felt to have hindered progress in the past.

Prioritizing issues in education Perhaps the most critical part of the meeting was the time focused on plotting the way forward for the key priority areas for education in 2008; notably violence against girls in education, IMF and education, HIV/AIDS and education and adult literacy and *Reflect*. A lot of time was dedicated to providing clarity and enhancing participants' knowledge of the issues and familiarizing them with the latest research and publications. While some countries had experiences to share in working on specific issues, it became evident that there was a need to clarify our research, advocacy and campaigning efforts in order to achieve some degree of uniformity across ActionAid. Participants were able to develop initial country plans that would guide them in developing comprehensive strategies back home.

Also discussed were some of the forthcoming and existing multi-country projects that are about to

Advocates for the right to education like ActionAid, need to take a strong position nationally and internationally to constructively critique the encroachment of the state's role in providing primary education.

take off in ActionAid. These include:

- Transforming girls' education in Nigeria and Tanzania – funded by Comic Relief.
- Disaster Risk Reduction through Schools in nine countries – funded by DFID.
- Violence against girls in schools in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique – funded by the Big Lottery Fund.
- Quality of education work in Senegal, India, Uganda and Malawi – proposal submitted to Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



Jenny Matthews/ActionAid

Some key agreements from the meeting:

Education financing: Countries will develop national strategies for work on education financing and undertake new research involving a wide range of stakeholders. Findings will be shared with allies in order to collectively engage governments.

Violence against girls in education: Countries will convene local partners currently working on or interested in the issue, they will propose new and joint research, ensuring that this is linked to a wider national strategy. The Model Policy, developed in Harare, will be used as a reference point in any related research or advocacy work.

HIV/AIDS and education: Work on education and HIV/AIDS will be revitalised with the help of the new International Education and HIV/AIDS coordinator Dhianaraj Chetty. Education staff will work closely with colleagues working on HIV/AIDS in country and share all documentation.

Adult literacy and Reflect: Participants will set up meetings to share the *Abuja Call for Action* with NGOs working on literacy and/or *Reflect* and later with the government's head of adult literacy. They will encourage organisations using *Reflect* to revisit the adult literacy dimension and improve their evaluation approaches.

Roles of lead education people in ActionAid: Education staff will strengthen links with other thematic teams at country level, strengthen their national education team by lobbying country management for more education staff and use the education rights pack to build understanding of the rights-based approach to education.

For more information contact:
balaraba.aliyu@actionaid.org

Latest publications

2007 GCE School Report: Not up to Scratch

Launched in May 2007, the annual GCE school report gives an assessment and ranking of the 22 richest OECD countries, based on their contributions to poorer nations, and holds them to account for their promises to provide aid for education. This year's report *Not up to Scratch* reveals that donors' efforts have fallen far short of reaching the vital targets needed to achieve EFA by 2015. In fact, it records a drop in donor funding for basic education. Currently, aid to education is less than a third of the estimated \$9 billion required annually to give every child the chance of completing primary education. Shockingly, no G8 country is even close to giving its fair share of this sum and they are even farther from contributing to the \$16 billion needed annually to achieve EFA goals, which encompass adult literacy and early childhood care and education.

According to the report, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway are at the top of the class while the US, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, is ranked a shocking 20th followed only by Greece and Austria who trail at the very bottom. Clearly, richer nations need to step up their efforts in order to live up to the promises they made at Dakar or the target of achieving EFA by 2015 will not be met.

Download the report at: www.campaignforeducation.org

Building strategic partnerships between teachers' unions and NGOs

Quality teachers are required to achieve quality education but this is often a challenge to realise. On the advice of donors (particularly the World Bank), many governments take stopgap measures to reducing teacher shortages such as large-scale

recruitment of non-professional teachers. They also have to contend with inflexible IMF conditionalities, which are tied to loans and force them to curtail public spending, making it impossible to hire trained teachers. Huge investments need to be made to education if the EFA goals are to be met. Outrageous pupil teacher ratios need to reduce and education systems need to be able to absorb the 77 million out-of-school children in the world today.

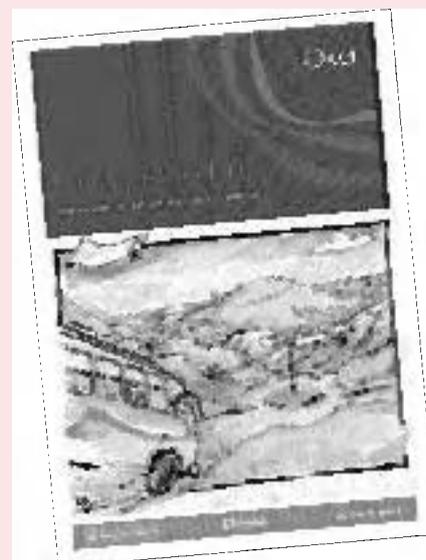
Both ActionAid and Education International believe education to be a fundamental right and have come to understand that achieving EFA goals means building stronger partnerships and platforms within civil society. Since 2006, they have made strong efforts towards strengthening relationships between teachers unions and NGOs. In 2006, representatives of the two organisations came together in a meeting that resulted in convergence of political understanding and the release of a joint document dubbed 'The Parktonian Recommendations'. The report, *Building strategic partnerships between teachers' unions and NGOs*, outlines the agreements and recommendations that were adopted and consolidated in the Parktonian Recommendations. Historically, partnerships between teachers' unions and NGOs have been marred by mistrust and have been superficial at best. This document offers a strong rationale as to how and why both NGOs and unions need to work together based on complementary strengths. The Parktonian Recommendations take a strong stance in the defence of quality public education and urges civil society actors everywhere to build stronger partnerships and coalitions. It also identifies critical issues on which teachers' unions and NGOs need to work together effectively. These include macroeconomics and education, HIV/AIDS and education, gender and education and the question of non-professionals.

Download this document at www.actionaid.org

Driving the Bus: the journey of national education coalitions

Driving the Bus is a tool for reflection for anyone involved in or supporting a national civil society coalition and is a must read for anyone interested in building a coalition. It attempts to not only define but to enhance understanding on the strategic purpose and value of a national coalition. The publication is based on research carried out by the Commonwealth Education Fund to examine nationally appropriate ways to sustain funding for civil society organisations working in education advocacy. It examines a national coalition as a vehicle for driving social change and draws on the examples and experiences of numerous coalitions in 17 countries in Africa, Asia and the UK. *Driving the Bus* is written around a set of strategic questions regarding the development and experiences of a coalition and provides evidence-based ideas and references on questions such as: What are the origins and stimuli for coalition building? What are the coalition's aims and objectives? What is the coalition's structure? Who are the coalition members? How is the coalition funded? Who drives the coalition? What helps and what hinders the coalitions' work, etc.

Download this publication at www.commonwealtheducationfund.org



Funding Change: Sustaining Civil Society Advocacy in Education

Since 2002, CEF has supported civil society driven education work in 16 low-income commonwealth countries. This was made possible through a £12 million grant from the Department for International Development. *Funding Change* is based on a research commissioned by CEF in 2006 aimed at exploring ways in which its mission could be sustained at national level as the CEF programme draws to a close in 2008.

The report offers a comprehensive analysis, which reveals that civil society does not benefit significantly from the present direct budget support international aid architecture. International donors are coordinating aid efforts behind sector-wide education plans through mechanisms such as the Fast Track Initiative. However, while these are welcomed they are more often than not focused on ministries of education with little space for the active engagement of civil society. Yet the commitments made at the World Education Forum in Dakar 2000, promised the systematic involvement of civil society in the development and monitoring of national education plans.

The report points out that there is a need for Civil Society Education Funds (CSEFs) registered in each country and managed by inter-agency boards with small, independent secretariats. These national CSEFs, if managed properly, could provide the funding safety nets that civil society coalitions will need to stay above water for the next few years. They would support CSOs to engage with and advocate to their own

governments on education policy work that proves difficult to fund through existing mechanisms.

The report suggests developing CSEFs drawing on lessons from previous experiences of funding broad-based CSO work at national level. It also draws attention to the need for widespread support for establishing CSEFs that are nationally owned and which could provide long-term solutions for civil society engagement in national education sector planning.

Download this report at www.commonwealtheducationfund.org



Education Rights: a guide for activists and practitioners

Education Rights is a practical resource pack that was developed by ActionAid for the Global Campaign for Education. It is meant to serve as a guide for anyone working on education issues and interested in using a human rights based approach with a focus on people-centred advocacy and power. The pack draws on over 30 years of

experience in education work by a wide range of activists and practitioners in more than 15 countries around the world, highlighting how different initiatives can contribute to the human rights based way of working. Based on these practical experiences, the pack develops a range of ideas and methodologies to put the approach into practice.

The pack offers analysis and reflection on the rights based ideology and focuses on six strategic areas, which also make up the six sections of the pack, they are:

- Understanding and securing the right to education
- Working with excluded groups
- Financing of education
- Citizen participation in education
- Securing rights in education
- Advancing a full EFA agenda

Each section discusses a range of activities under the broad theme and offers case studies and examples from practice as to how the work can be implemented, it goes on to offer methodologies and even participatory tools that can be used directly or be adapted to suit any context. Work at local level is prioritized, with discussions on how this can be linked to national and international level policy influencing and campaigning. The ideas proffered are framed in a participatory manner to support work and engagement with a wide range of actors on pertinent education issues.

The pack aims to encourage critical thinking and debate on the use of the rights based approach to education on issues that affect people from different perspectives.

Download the rights pack at www.actionaid.org

To access the ActionAid reports, go to ActionAid main page -
What we do - Education - Research and Publications.



Profile: Education Activist

Interview with Maria Khan

Where are you from?

I was born in the Philippines but I live in India.

Education:

I read business administration at the University of the Philippines and later got a masters degree in rural development at the University of East Anglia.

Present job:

I have been the Secretary General of the Asia South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE) since 1995.

When did you start working in development?

I was a student activist during the Marcos era in the Philippines and was deeply involved in the anti-dictatorship movement. The movements were the genesis of what are now known as NGOs in the country. I pursued this route which was largely service-delivery oriented in its early stages until I eventually settled into rural development work.

What inspired you to focus on education?

Having done a lot of rural development work, I came to realize education was essential in our struggle to facilitate citizen participation and social transformation.

What is the ASPBAE approach to adult literacy?

While advocacy is a large part of our work as it is critical to maintain pressure on governments to provide adult education of good quality to its citizens, there is also a component that involves coalition building and working with grassroots networks and CBOs. We are also doing a lot of research and documentation, because the literature on this issue is predominantly northern based we are trying to encourage the emergence of grassroots scholars to fill the void and get a different perspective.

Any significant achievements to date?

ASPBAE contributed to the discourse at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. We were able to ensure that adult literacy was included in the Dakar agenda which was previously dominated by UPE.

What do you perceive to be the biggest challenge to achieving global adult literacy goals?

The number of adult illiterates globally is scandalous and the challenges are numerous. Besides the obvious ones, we need to understand that adult literacy is a complex area involving many components which makes it difficult to hold donors to account. A lot of the data is sparse and not self supporting and the expense of measuring this area is too astronomical for most poor countries to bear. But a key element that is missing is that adult learners are not yet organised enough to create movements that will become a force to be reckoned with. There needs to be a critical mass of adult learners who will have legitimacy to put governments and donors to task.

How has ASPBAE affected your life?

ASPBAE has expanded my world view. I have had a lot of exposure to different cultures which has broadened my perspective. It has enhanced my appreciation of gender inequality and the discrimination that women suffer.

Who is the person you admire the most and why?

My mother; through her I was able to grasp the concept of social responsibility at a very early age and she inspired in me the belief that I could become anything I set out to be.

What book would you recommend?

'*A Thousand Splendid Suns*' by Khaled Hosseini; an inspirational story that revolves around the life of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.

What are your hopes for the future?

I hope that there will be a lot more north/south collaboration in the future. The GCE has done a lot to bring international attention to critical education. I hope that we are able to sustain this position and go even further. I hope that by 2015 there will have been enough progress so that we will not be making the same arguments and donors will not be making the same promises.