



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Head Office

5, Bd du Roi Albert II
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 11
Fax +32 2 224 06 06
headoffice@ei-ie.org
http://www.ei-ie.org

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Mr. Uri Rosenthal
Mr. Ben Knapen
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 20061,
2500 EB The Hague,
The Netherlands
Fax: + 31 70 3484848

Dear Ministers,

As the Global Union Federation representing 30 million educators around the world, Education International (EI) is profoundly concerned about the effect proposed changes to the Dutch Government's development cooperation policy will have on efforts to achieve universal primary Education For All (EFA) which is a key Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

While we applaud your commitment to ensure ODA expenditure does not fall below the international benchmark of 0.7% GNP for OECD countries, we are alarmed at the tragic consequences any cutback in your commitment to education budgets will have. Not only will such a move endanger the continuation of primary schooling for the 40 million children that lesser developed countries have successfully brought into primary school between the years 2005-2010, but it would also thwart the possibility to extend entry into primary school for a further 75 million children between 2010-2015. An irrefutable consequence will be that the prize of Education For All is snatched from right under our noses.

Over the years, EI has enjoyed a highly constructive and valued partnership with your government through the EFAIDS and SALIN project. In the past five years this programme has provided essential health education training to more than 400,000 teachers in 47 countries, benefiting 16 million children. This continues to be an efficient, inexpensive and very successful program which has empowered communities in lesser developed countries to close in on the EFA goal and other challenges related to the MDGs.

We also want to bring your attention to a resolution that was adopted this week at EI's African Regional Conference in Congo-Brazzaville. In the resolution delegates from 120 education unions in 53 African countries urge OECD countries to keep the promise that was made at Dakar 2000 to financially support those programmes and activities that help to achieve EFA Goals.

The education unions articulated the immense contribution financial support for education development programmes have made to improve access to education, alleviate poverty, and to democratic and social developments in Africa over the past 10 years, but they expressed genuine concern "that countries are now cutting back on those budgets or, in the case of the Dutch Government, excluding education from receipt of funds from their reduced ODA budget."

Our African member organisations acknowledge the significant contribution of countries, like the Netherlands, to educational developments in those countries trying to achieve EFA Goals, but they stress that these goals have not been achieved, nor will they be achieved without continuing financial support from ODA budgets. African colleagues state that the impact of withdrawing such financial support for the most effective programmes would be devastating for entire generations of children, women and illiterate adults in Africa.



The Netherlands has been a major contributor to the EFA Fast Track Initiative. This demonstrates that you share our view that education is the key to democratic change, social development and economic growth.

While we support ODA initiatives in areas of food security, agriculture and water technology, we regret that such initiatives cannot succeed without basic and vocational education being the first priority in the endeavor to eliminate poverty through sustained development.

In light of the above I implore that the Parliamentary Committee and you reconsider your current plans and pledge to continue giving education the most prominent place on your development agenda.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Fred van Leeuwen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke and a small flourish at the end.

Fred van Leeuwen
EI General Secretary