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# EI (Education International) EFA (Education For All) Assessment



# EI EFA Assessment

As the 2015 deadline for the achievement of Education for All is fast approaching, discussions on what will happen to EFA are gaining momentum. Will the EFA framework disappear? Will a new set of goals be adopted? Will the deadline for the current six goals be extended? The future of EFA is uncertain. What is certain is that the global debate on the future of education will be better informed if the professionals delivering education and facing the classroom reality on a daily basis are able to share their views and experiences on what happened to EFA in practice. This is precisely what Education International's EFA assessment aims to achieve. By mobilizing teachers and education support staff from all over the world to identify the successes and shortcomings of the EFA movement, we aim to draw lessons and make recommendations for the future of EFA.

EI and its member organisations represent over 30 million education workers from 170 countries and territories around the globe. It is a vast network of professionals working in very different contexts and cultures, but sharing one common goal: delivering quality education for all. The EI EFA assessment is an initiative that aims to tap this large source of expertise and knowledge of education to bring the classroom reality to the centre of the global education debate.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

EI organised consultation workshops, interviews, focus groups and surveys to allow teachers to share their views and provide evidence of the classroom reality. The assessment aims to shed light not only on the six EFA goals, but also on the strategies that were adopted within the Dakar Framework. To achieve this, the assessment is based on four pillars:

- **Commitment and resources:** Did governments meet their commitments to increase funding for basic education, promote transparent budgeting and curb corruption?
- **Dialogue and participation:** Did teachers and civil society have a chance to participate in decision-making process affecting education and engage meaningfully in planning, implementing and monitoring of EFA programmes?
- **Policy and legislation:** What policies were adopted to achieve EFA? What worked and what failed?
- **Teaching and learning:** Did EFA have an impact in the classroom? Did governments meet their commitment to enhance teachers' status and morale and provide children with safe, healthy and adequately resourced schools?

## WHAT HAVE TEACHERS SAID SO FAR?

### Commitment and resources

#### *Political commitment has been more genuine in speech than in action*

Many countries have failed to increase their education budget: while new legislation and education strategies were developed after 2000, insufficient allocation of funding has prevented their implementation. Teachers deplore the fact that education budgets rely heavily on foreign aid and do not receive enough domestic resources. Moreover, the unpredictability of foreign aid has hindered effective education sector planning and the sustainable funding of EFA in those countries. Teachers also warn against the growing privatisation of education across the world. Establishing free public education and abolishing school fees have not always been accompanied by increased public funding. This jeopardizes the chances to access a quality education for the children that need it most.

#### *More funding has not always meant better funding*

The limited resources available are not effectively used and too often a significant part of the education budget is only used after a considerable delay. Despite governments' commitment to establishing structures for civil society's participation in transparent and accountable budgeting and financing systems, teachers are rarely consulted. As a consequence, resources allocation does not respond to local needs and priorities. Corruption remains a major obstacle to the effective use of resources: a substantial portion of the fund allocated to education purposes never reaches schools.

## Dialogue and participation

### *EFA has not taken advantage of teachers' expertise*

In 2000, national governments recognised that EFA could not be achieved without civil society, including teachers, playing an active role. Where teachers have been meaningfully involved in educational developments, they have contributed to improving teachers' training, qualification requirements and deployment procedures, as well as to initiatives to tackle teachers' absenteeism. In most cases however, teachers are rarely offered a real opportunity to contribute, locally or nationally, to decisions affecting their professional lives, teaching environments and which impact ultimately on children's learning experience.

### *Governments failed to set up well-functioning structures for civil society's participation*

In those cases where governments set up mechanisms to consult civil society, these have not functioned properly and have had limited impact. Civil society's input was rarely taken into consideration. Very often, especially at the school level, civil society representatives are directly appointed by education authorities and lack independence. In the absence of a proper framework for dialogue and consultation, teachers have no choice but to organise and contribute to the debate and act to make their voice and concerns heard.

## Policy and legislation

### *Early childhood education (ECE) is inaccessible to the poorest*

Teachers welcome the development of early childhood education policies (ECE) and efforts to expand the provision of ECE services (EFA Goal 1). Overall, State funding for ECE is low and provision limited, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, teacher training and salaries remain grossly inadequate at this level. Governments rely largely on private provision of ECE services, where fees and indirect costs of education mean that the poorest children do not participate in ECE in many countries.

### *Children are excluded from primary education due to poor policy implementation*

Several countries have made constitutional amendments setting out the right to free and compulsory education and many have abolished school fees, as part of efforts towards implementing universal access to and completion of free and compulsory primary education (EFA Goal 2). Teachers report that inclusive education programmes and the provision of free textbooks and school meals have contributed towards improving education quality in schools. Many programmes, however, have lacked strategies and adequate funding for their effective implementation. Moreover, access to education remains limited in rural and remote areas, where teachers are faced with huge class sizes, multi-grade teaching and limited resources. Teachers cite exclusion from education and drop-outs related to poverty, gender, culture, location, conflict and other factors as major challenges to the achievement of EFA.

### *Too few young people and adults access vocational education and training (VET) and adult literacy programmes*

Many countries have implemented vocational education and training programmes, open and distance courses, bridging/accelerated learning, and non-formal education programmes as part of efforts to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met (EFA Goal 3). Teachers consider that several of these programmes have been poorly designed in terms of curriculum and have had limited reach due to the high-cost of participation. Similarly, adult literacy programmes (EFA Goal 4) are underfunded and have failed to ensure widespread participation.

### *Despite progress, much remains to be done to ensure gender equality in education*

Teachers note progress towards the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education (EFA Goal 5), through the promotion of girls' education, recruitment of and incentives for female teachers, and the increased social awareness of the importance of girl's education. Many schools, however, continue to lack appropriate facilities such as separate toilets and gender-sensitive teaching materials. Teachers consider that there are not enough female teachers to act as role models for girls, particularly in rural areas. Continued challenges reported by teachers include: gender stereotyping in curricula; sexual harassment and violence against girls in communities; and drop-out and exclusion linked to child marriage and poverty, among other factors.

### *Qualified teacher shortages impede quality education*

As part of efforts to improve the quality of education (EFA Goal 6), several countries have improved the provision of teacher training, established minimum qualification requirements, focused on curriculum development and promoted the engagement of parents and communities in education. Teacher shortages, however, remain a major challenge to education quality. Moreover, many teachers continue to lack access to adequate pre-service and in-service teacher training and professional development and receive low salaries. The widespread recruitment of contract teachers in several countries, many of whom lack appropriate qualifications and training, severely impedes the provision of quality education. In schools, teachers are faced with inadequate teaching and learning materials, outdated curricula and insufficient resources.

## Teaching and Learning

The classroom is the epicentre of the Education for All movement. Recognizing that, governments committed themselves to creating environments conducive to learning and to enhancing the status, morale and professionalism of teachers. The achievement of EFA requires schools that are safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced. It needs teachers that are well-trained, motivated and have the materials and conditions required to put their expertise into practice and provide students with good quality education. What is the reality in the classroom today?

### *Respect for the profession is on the wane*

Teachers see the lack of policies to enhance the teaching profession as evidence of the little importance governments attach to their status and morale. The

celebration of World Teachers' Day is considered a positive development and an important moment in the school calendar. There are, however, very few reasons to celebrate the rest of the year. Decisions that affect teachers' professional lives are largely made without their involvement. The massive hiring of untrained teachers undermines public perception of the profession, as it conveys the message that anyone can be a teacher. Despite high expectations placed on teachers to ensure students' results, the context in which education takes place is far from adequate to contribute to satisfactory learning outcomes.

### *Working conditions: progress is too little and too slow to change long-lasting negative trend.*

Small gains achieved in terms of salary have not compensated for seriously deteriorating working conditions. While concrete measures have been taken to enhance teachers' standards of living, including hardship allowances and harmonisation of salaries with those of other civil servants, salary increases have not matched inflation and the increasing costs of living. Besides, national education systems were not prepared to absorb the enrolment boom of the EFA generation. The result is overcrowded classrooms and an ever-increasing number of teachers hired under precarious contracts.

### *More training opportunities do not mean better training.*

There have been improvements as far as the availability of teacher training is concerned. There are more education colleges and training centres teachers can resort to nowadays. However, they are concerned about the quality of the training provided, as it rarely responds to classroom needs. While governments claim to focus on improving quality of education, some have, paradoxically, reduced the duration of pre-service training. This has inevitable consequences for the quality of education provided to children and young adults. The increasing offer of training in private institutions, and the lack of widespread and comprehensive programmes to support teachers who want to improve their pedagogical practice, are also significant obstacles to enhancing the quality of education.

### *Entering the profession: requirements and procedures have improved*

The adoption of more strict qualification requirements to enter the profession is seen positively by teachers. Many countries have introduced admission tests that are considered clearer, but recruitment procedures are still opaque and leave margins for corruption. Many governments fail to enforce the qualification requirements and the regulations for recruitment procedures when hiring personnel under temporary and precarious contracts.

### *Teacher shortage cannot be addressed if teaching is not an attractive profession*

Finding ways to attract new entrants to the profession remains a challenge for national education systems. Little has changed in this regard since the adoption of the Dakar Framework for Action. Governments have not been successful in implementing new and effective policies to make teaching an attractive career choice, despite some progress in countries where medical insurance and pension

schemes are now in place. It is difficult to promote interest in a teaching career when potential candidates see their own teachers as people who struggle to make ends meet. The low salaries and difficult working conditions keep the young away from teaching and many of those who enter a teaching career leave after a couple of years.

### *More schools were built, but teachers need better pedagogical support*

Many schools were built since the adoption of the EFA goals. However, many are inadequately maintained and neglect is eroding the progress made in terms of infrastructure. There is poor maintenance of school facilities and poor hygiene conditions. The lack of safe water and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls remains a serious problem. The resources invested in building schools were not matched by efforts to make better teaching materials more widely available and to provide better pedagogical support to teachers.

## WHAT DO TEACHERS RECOMMEND FOR THE FUTURE OF EFA?

Numerous recommendations were made for governments to improve the EFA process, among which:

- Put education plans and strategies into practice and fund them accordingly;
- Put in place mechanisms for transparent budgeting and monitoring of investments in education;
- Promote the active engagement of teachers' unions and civil society in planning and implementing programmes;
- Promote social dialogue with teachers' organisations to make teaching a more attractive profession;
- Develop and implement high standards of pre- and in-service teacher training including on-going professional development and ensure that high quality teacher programmes are developed together with teachers;
- Upgrade the qualifications of untrained teachers;
- Promote incentives to attract and retain teachers in rural areas;
- Ensure teachers are paid a decent wage, negotiated and agreed with teacher unions;
- Reduce class sizes to allow for better teaching;
- Strengthen curriculum development;
- Involve teachers in the monitoring and evaluation of school performance.



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