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Further information on all projects available from Emma at ActionAid.

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Cover photograph – Flood SAR training ©*ActionAid*

Editorial

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 23rd edition of *Education Action*

This edition begins with an article on a fascinating collaborative research project, which examined the role and influence of parents and teachers on children's learning outcomes in primary schools in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda. Next, Andrew Mamedu, working on a project to transform the education of girls in Nigeria and Tanzania, looks at how attempts to gather information on girls' school enrolment, retention and completion have come up against numerous obstacles, including mice, fire, floods and termites. One of the key factors keeping girls across Africa out of school is violence. Asmara Figue outlines a valuable new project aimed at preventing violence in schools and protecting girl's rights to and in education in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique.

Our striking cover image shows participants in a training exercise to prepare for floods. It is essential that communities in high-risk areas are prepared for future disasters and schools have a central role to play. It's therefore great news that disaster risk reduction is now a central part of Nepal's formal education curriculum, as outlined in the article by John Abuya. It's also important that schoolchildren in developed countries understand some of the causes and impacts of climate change and PowerDown, introduced by Janet Convery, is a toolkit aimed at helping them do just that.

Peter Hyll-Larsen and Maria Ron Balsera describe their work on the Right to Education project, which aims to provide tools to make the law more accessible to those working with education rights. I would encourage anyone interested in this topic to take a look at the new website www.right-to-education.org.

Dhianaraj Chetty and the TIWOLOKE team describe the involvement of teachers in Malawi in an innovative behaviour change project and how this has catalysed the development of one of Africa's largest networks of teachers living with HIV and AIDS. Also on the subject of HIV and AIDS is an introduction to a fascinating book by David Archer and Tania Boler, which looks at the interconnected crises in education and HIV and AIDS.

It has been a good year for Reflect, with a UNESCO literacy prize awarded to an organisation working with the approach for the fourth time. GOAL Sudan won the prize in 2005 and in a fascinating article; Rob Kevilhan describes GOAL's experience on the question of language choice in Reflect circles in Southern Sudan. Particularly exciting for practitioners is the publication of a brand new Reflect Evaluation Framework, providing a flexible set of tools to help them work through a participatory evaluation process. In the UK a project to adapt Reflect for teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) has generated lots of interest amongst teachers and others working in the sector as well as positive feedback from students.

We also have key articles on the impact of the recent G20 meeting which re-empowered the International Monetary Fund. What does this mean for education financing? And we look at the opportunities presented for creating a new Global Fund for Education For All.

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) project has now come to an end but the important work done by civil society education advocacy groups around the world continues and Jill Hart introduces Civil Society Education Funds, which have been created to support this work. One of the most powerful advocates of the CEF was Eddie George, whose death in early 2009 was a great loss to all those involved in the project. We pay him tribute.

Emma Pearce

Abbreviations:

ANCEFA	– Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
ASPBAE	– Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education
CEF	– Commonwealth Education Fund
CLADE	– Latin-American Campaign for the Right to Education (Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación)
CSO	– civil society organisation
DFID	– UK Department for International Development
EFA	– Education for All
FAWE	– Forum for African Women Educationalists
FTI	– Fast Track Initiative
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

Collaborative research for improving learning outcomes in primary schools in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda

by Akanksha Marphatia, Julie Juma, Topher Kwiri, Aissata Dia, Charlotte Bazira and Elise Legault, ILOPS initiative team

In 2008, ActionAid and partners in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda collaborated to study the role of parents and teachers in improving children's learning outcomes. Our goal was to better understand each actor's role and how they can work together to improve the quality of education. The *Improving Learning Outcomes in Primary Schools* (ILOPS) initiative was supported by the *Quality Education in Developing Countries Initiative* of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This article brings together the three core components of the initiative: participant experiences of being researchers in the field,[1] the literature review[2] and the in-country data collection. Survey and literature review findings are presented alongside ideas for future interventions.

Our goal was...to create opportunities to move actors from being passive receptors of problems...to active participants in thinking about and improving education.

In addition to research at the national level, the project focused on 60 primary schools and communities in two of the most disadvantaged and educationally challenged districts in each country: Bururi and Karuzi (Burundi); Machinga and Mchinji (Malawi); Foudiougne and Tambacounda (Senegal); and Kalangala and Masindi (Uganda). Our research was unique in involving a wide range of actors (education coalitions, teachers' unions, *Reflect* circles, parents, pupils, teachers, ministries of education and national research institutes) directly in the development of survey instruments, gathering data, analysing results and conceptualising a three-year project from the findings.

This approach was informed by the experiences of researchers who revealed that although progress is being made, the inclusion of stakeholders in research and reform has been infrequent and shallow at best. However, where these processes have been participatory in nature, they have proven to be successful. Our goal was therefore to create opportunities to move actors from being passive receptors of problems (i.e. listening to findings from a consultant-led research) and functional supporters (i.e. building schools) to active participants in thinking about and improving education. Each country had a unique partnership model depending on the level of prior collaboration, the history of coalition building/networking and the space for civil society advocacy. The partnerships in each country created space for real engagement in discussions around the roles of schools, teachers, parents, pupils and governments in making schools more effective, creating a wider platform for advocacy and campaigning. The shared understanding gained from the survey findings have led to locally derived, practical and sustainable solutions for a three-year follow-on intervention.

The survey

The challenge: striking a balance between collecting vast amounts of information to understand the big picture and focusing on a limited set of issues to deepen understanding.

Who asked the questions?
Each country had a unique set of partners who were trained as 'researchers'. There were different teams for the national/district survey and the community/school research. See matrix below for details on partnerships in each country.

Who answered the questions?
National and District Ministry officials, education groups, parents, community leaders, Parent Teacher Associations and School Management Committee members, teachers, untrained teachers, head teachers and pupils.

What did we want to know?
Document reviews, individual interviews and focus group discussions facilitated collection of the following information:

- **How do national and local policies support teachers, promote parental participation in school and improve learning outcomes?**
- **How do stakeholders understand national policy and their ascribed roles? Is there a gulf between policy and practice?**
- **What is the profile of teachers (trained, contract, untrained) what training is available and how good is it?**
- **What roles and expectations do Government, teachers, parents, communities and pupils have for themselves and of each other?**
- **How and in which ways do parents participate in schools and in their children's learning?**
- **What do the actors expect children should be learning in school and what are they really learning?**
- **What needs to change and how in order to improve the quality of education?**

1 Edge, K., Khamsi, K. and Selun, B. (2008) Learning from Stakeholders as Researchers: ActionAid's International Learning Outcomes Project. End of Project Evaluation Report. Forthcoming.

2 Edge, K., Tao, S. Riley, K and Khamsi, K. (2008) *Teacher Quality and Parental Participation: An Exploratory Review of Research and Resources Related to Influencing Student Outcomes*. Forthcoming.

Exchange and understanding

An important outcome of these partnerships was the understanding and accepting of different viewpoints. According to a teachers' union representative, "*The project allowed trade unions and the government to work together, in another framework than trade unions' demands. This was positive.*" Similarly, a government official explained, "*…the civil society people trying to lobby for more resources, sometimes want things that maybe are against whatever government is trying to do, so in a way it has helped me to appreciate why civil society organisations behave in the way they do, when they lobby for more resource.*"

Overall, the comparative setting offered an opportunity for exchange and learning: "*…our situations in countries could be slightly different, but most of the challenges in education are similar…through this project we are able to see how our friends are going to tackle those issues...when you make a mistake somewhere, maybe there's someone else, in another country, who did the job better and can advise you.*"

The project findings confirm the need for greater understanding of how policy and practice around parental participation and teacher quality influence student outcomes. In particular, there is a lack of context-specific and culturally relevant on-the ground research published by Southern sources. There is also limited knowledge of government policy in communities and schools, and in some cases confusion around the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders.

Key findings from the in-country surveys, literature review, evaluation and future project proposals are summarised below.

Project findings – teachers

"*…I didn't know there were so many unqualified teachers in the system… that there was a systematic and parallel recruitment of unqualified teachers throughout the system…some of them follow a two-month training, and then are thrown into a class, facing pupils. That was an important shock for me.*"

ILOPS researcher

Survey findings

- About 11% of teachers in Burundi and 12% in Malawi and Uganda are untrained. In Senegal, officially, all teachers are trained, but our research showed that in one district over 30% were untrained.
- 12% of teachers in Malawi, Burundi and Uganda and 66% in Senegal are contract or voluntary teachers.
- Initial teacher training is obsolete and varies from two years (Uganda & Malawi) to one to four years (Burundi); it was reduced from four years to six months in Senegal.
- Inadequate financing and caps on recruitment of teachers persist while need increases.
- The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) continues to be very high, reaching over 100 in some regions.

Literature review findings

- More information is available from sources in the North and a significant portion of the literature from the South is published by agencies like UNESCO and the World Bank.
- Teacher training is key to teacher quality (Chapman, 2000 and Kent, 2005) and meaningful, context-specific teacher-centred approaches are important. However, teacher trainers may not necessarily have the knowledge and experience required or be familiar with proven professional development models (Courtney, 2007).
- Methods of rapid training are often employed to meet demand, especially where para or contract teachers are concerned. In 2004 between one fifth and one third of primary teachers in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia had not been trained for the job (Duthileul, 2004). However, the impact of these teachers on learning outcomes is mixed.
- An ongoing policy challenge is the lack of data on the impact and effectiveness of different training models but there is agreement that it needs to be relevant, timely and context specific.
- Improvement of classroom conditions and pedagogy would improve teacher quality (Barrett, 2007) as would a bottom-up approach of consulting and including teachers (Dembele, 1994 and Heneveld, 2007).

Planned interventions

- Engage the coalition, union and communities in monitoring recruitment, deployment and financing for teachers. This includes analysis of the national policy including conditionalities of the IMF and World Bank.
- Lobby for a national policy on in-service training.
- Research effective, quality training programmes.
- Review teachers' code of conduct and establish a peer support mechanism to ensure compliance.
- Create a national network of ministries, civil society and communities to improve recruitment, deployment and training.

Project findings – parental involvement

"I knew a little about parental involvement, but I didn't know that although they want to take part in the educational system, they're not quite consulted. It's a peripheral association, whereby they're told…you're included in the regional, departmental or local plan; they are there, but in fact they're only there to hear the decisions, their viewpoints aren't taken into account." ILOPS researcher

Survey findings

- It is important to build parents' confidence in their ability and to raise awareness about the importance of their role in improving learning outcomes both through school- and home-based activities.
- Most parents think their main responsibility is to provide books. Other aspects such as supporting children with homework and participation in school activities or engaging with teachers were neglected.
- Although many teachers complain that parents are not involved in their children's education, some are wary about parents gaining too much control over school management.
- In many cases, PTAs co-exist with SMCs, and there is confusion about roles and responsibilities.
- Violence against girls is increasing in schools.

Literature review findings

- Much of the published literature on parental participation in student learning is from the North, focusing on role of parents in school and at home, often directly in support of the student's academic deployment.
- Literature from the South focuses on parental engagement in governance issues: in school-level decision-making and roles in financing education and decentralisation, rather than involvement in their own children's learning.
- Research exploring parental participation generally supports positive associations between parental involvement and their children's learning outcomes. However, many of these are correlational; causal links cannot be assumed.
- Sheldon (2002) found that if parents believe they have a role to play in their children's education at home and school, they will act on it. Anderson and Minke (2007) say if parents feel confident about their ability, they will help children at home.
- Factors that influence the type and extent of parental participation include parents' knowledge, skills, attitudes, social networks and socio-economic status (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005 and Walker, et al. 2005, Nettles et al., 2008 and Sheldon, 2002).

Future interventions

- Expand *Reflect* approach to (a) support adult literacy, (b) sensitise parents about their roles and responsibilities and those of governments and (c) train parents in monitoring children's learning.
- Raise awareness of school managers, teachers, PTA and SMC members and parents about the different and complementary roles that can improve school effectiveness.
- Influence government policy to clarify roles of PTA and SMCs and to provide resources to both groups.
- Sensitise all key actors on violence and build a platform to review different sector policies and enforcement on this issue.

Senegal – the 'quota sécuritaire'

by Elise Legault & Aissata Dia

"Being a teacher used to be such a prestigious job in Senegal. In every village, the teacher was one of the most respected people. Now the system considers anybody ready to be a teacher."

Teachers' union representative

In Senegal, the length of teacher training has decreased from four years to only six months. In the 1990s, following falls in enrolment rates because of a lack of teachers, a system of 'volunteers' was introduced, in which teachers without a professional diploma were hired to fill the gap. Today this system has been institutionalised and is now the only route to teaching. 'Volunteers' receive a basic six months training, but are paid about half the pay of civil servant teachers. After two years of volunteering, they are allowed to take an exam to become civil servants, but every year only a limited number of volunteers are allowed to take the exam. **These contract, non-professional teachers now make up 53% of all primary school teachers.**

In addition to volunteers, there are teachers in the system who received little or no training, and who are recruited arbitrarily through what is called the **'quota sécuritaire'**. Once the regular new teacher spaces have been allocated, the gaps are filled with individuals who did not go through the formal hiring process. Some of them follow part of the six months training while others are parachuted into classrooms without any training. Many education actors consider this system highly politicised and corrupt. Following the dissemination of the ILOPS project research results among a range of education actors, including the Minister of Education, the Government has announced that it will eliminate this way of hiring teachers. Following up on this promise will be an important task of education partners in Senegal.

Project findings – learning outcomes

"[I thought that] learning outcomes go as far as numeracy and literacy and knowledge, not behaviour, but at the end of the research I learned that learning outcomes equals behaviour change." ILOPS researcher

Survey findings

- In Uganda, teachers tested worse in the Primary Learning Exam than their students, raising serious concern over quality of teaching and achievement.
- The curriculum is not effectively implemented due to lack of training and time in the classroom.
- National language policy and the language of instruction is a big issue especially in Burundi as is adapting materials in local languages is a big obstacle.
- Parents and pupils would like to learn more practical subjects but these are not 'examinable' and are therefore not included in schools.
- Pupils gave the most illuminating responses as to what was wrong, how to improve teaching and learning and the type of support key actors should provide.
- Each country has a different examination system, and results are not always compiled nationally, making it difficult to compare results. Overall, achievement rates are alarmingly low, especially for girls.

Literature review findings

- Very little research attempts to correlate the influence of teachers on parents or vice versa.
- A study in Ghana by Akyeampong (2002) revealed that, until it is clear what kinds of methods have what impact on student teacher's capabilities and attitudes, it is difficult to devise appropriate courses.
- Studies show that purposeful parental involvement can have a positive influence on student learning, which is positively related to students' intellectual, affective and social development (Jeynes, 2005).
- Fan and Chen (2001) found that parental expectation for their children's educational achievement was the strongest factor in student achievement.
- Increased levels of parental involvement in school predicted improved child literacy.
- When parents were involved in student learning, students reported increased effort, concentration, attention and interest in and responsibility for learning, and higher perceived competence (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

Future interventions

- Pilot survey to monitor tracking of learning outcomes with key actors includes sensitisation on quality of learning (Malawi and Burundi).
- Local forum/network on quality education to engage all actors in discussing how to improve schools and children's learning.
- Support Ministry and teachers in developing local language materials for the thematic curriculum and engaging in curricula reform.
- Undertake projects in a limited number of schools to study, monitor and improve the influence and impact of parents and teachers on learning outcomes.
- Engagement of pupils in not only defining but also monitoring learning outcomes, parental, PTA/SMC engagement and teacher conduct will be an integral part of the interventions.
- Monitor impact of all initiatives on achievement of girls and boys.

Malawi – The importance of a teacher

by Julie Juma

In 1994, the Malawian government introduced free primary education, resulting in increasing enrolments. However, since 2000, the total number of primary school teachers has been falling, mainly due to attrition (often because of HIV and AIDS) and transfers to secondary schools. As a result, the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) has increased from 63 in 2000 to 89 in 2007.

The ILOPS survey conducted in Mchinji and Machinga districts of Malawi revealed that rural schools have acute teacher shortages. The average teacher to pupil ratio is 1:136 in Machinga and 1:108 in Mchinji. Understaffing results in teachers handling large classes and/or floating between two or more classes. The teachers that are available are demotivated and therefore do not give their best. Some of them have not been promoted for years and their salaries are very low. There are also many unqualified, volunteer teachers who receive just a token payment from the community (at the time of the survey, the two districts had 29 volunteer teachers).

The result is that quality of education is affected and minimal learning outcomes are achieved. One pupil from Saidi Mataka primary school in Machinga said, "*When the teacher goes to teach in another class we just play and when we are tired we go home.*" It is not surprising that the two districts have high repetition and dropout rates. The dropout rate for Machinga ranges from 12% in the lower classes, where the PTR is highest, to 9% in the higher classes; for Mchinji they range from 9% to 8%. Both districts have high repetition rates (28% in Std 1 for Mchinji) and are far from reaching the National Education Sector Plan target of reducing repetition to 5% by the year 2016.

For the Education for All goals to be achieved, it is essential to look at teacher deployment issues; teachers should be fairly distributed between the rural and urban schools and across classes within the school. In addition to this the government should train and recruit more teachers. A teacher training college is under construction in Liwonde and the Government is committed to train the volunteer teachers through Distance Education. Teacher motivation needs to be looked into seriously in order to curb high teacher attrition rates and absenteeism.

Uganda – The teacher in quality education

by Topher Kwiri

The Universal Primary Education programme was launched in Uganda in 1997, aiming to get all children in school by 2003. As a result, enrolment went up from 2.5 million in 1996 to more than 6.8 million in 2001. Currently up to 8 million children are accessing UPE. To deal with the massive increase and address issues of quality, the government has recruited and trained new teachers, built classrooms, revised the curriculum and bought textbooks.

However, despite the progress made through UPE, the situation remains of concern. The education sector budget as a percentage of the overall government of Uganda budget has been declining steadily from 24% in 2002/03 to 17.5% in 2005/06. The survival rate up to P5 is 62% for boys and 60% for girls the completion rate is 67% and 58% for boys and girls respectively. There are many children who cannot access UPE. These include girls, the disabled, and those with special education needs, children who are displaced due to war, orphans and children in nomadic communities. Most of those in school lack adequate learning resources and a conducive learning environment. The teacher pupil ratio is 1:56, the classroom pupil ratio is 1:90, and toilet and other facilities are inadequate.

In some districts like Masindi, where there are many internally displaced children, classes have up to 100 pupils especially in lower primary (ActionAid 2008). In circumstances like this the teacher reverts to crowd management, especially where that teacher is not properly prepared.

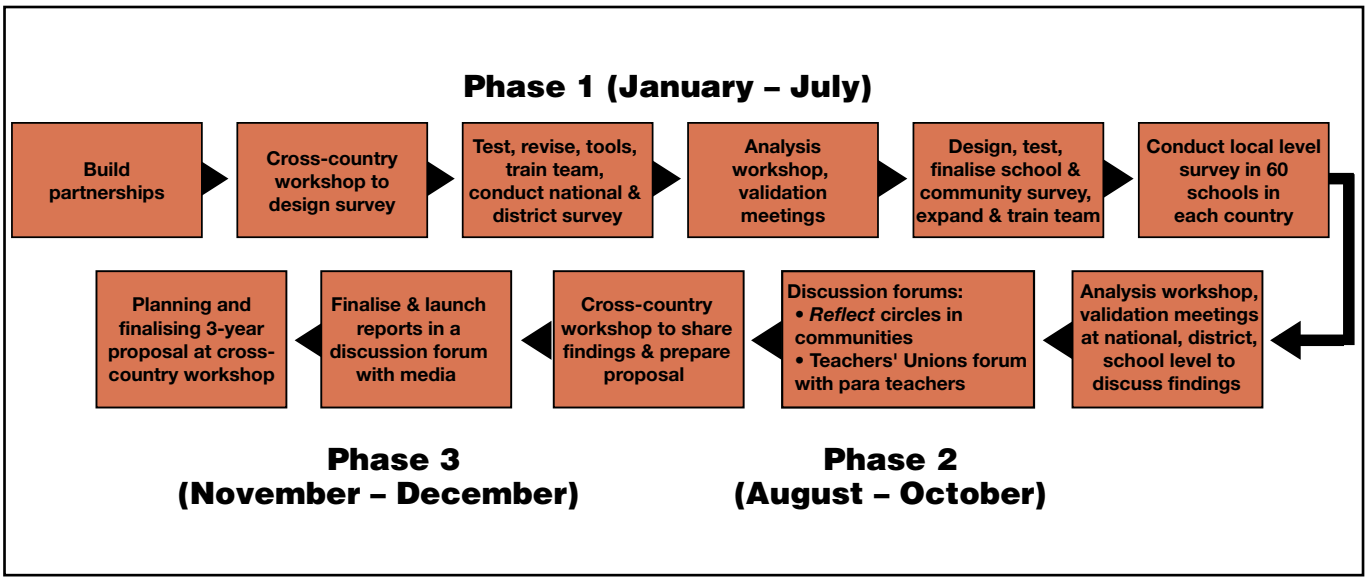
The research on improving quality of learning outcomes in Uganda by ActionAid (2008) revealed that teachers were not adequately prepared and did not have the correct teaching materials for the process of introducing the thematic curriculum – which was meant to provide for teaching in the local language for the first three years of primary school. To support teachers in their efforts to improve the quality of education, it is the responsibility of government and education authorities to provide high quality pre-service education and continuing professional development. There is an increasing tendency of school management committees to hire non-professional teachers to cope with increasing enrolment because the government has put ceilings on the number of teachers by district.

Teachers are also badly paid, poorly or not housed at all and lack medical schemes. There is therefore low motivation to teach and this adversely affects the quality of education. Governments should make teaching an attractive profession again. Teachers' pay needs to be increased and more investment needs to be made in teacher housing to in order to attract and retain teachers. Special consideration needs to be made for provision of health schemes and availability of ART facilities for teachers.

ActionAid

A teacher in one of the crowded classrooms in Masindi

Diagram 1: Summary of Year 1 project activities



Burundi – building partnerships in a post conflict setting

by Charlotte Bazira

Following over a decade of brutal civil war, the government of Burundi has prioritised education in the post-conflict/reconstruction period. An important focus when only one in two children go to school. The abolishment of school fees in 2005 lead to dramatic increases in gross enrolment rates, which stood at 108% in 2005-6. Though this looks impressive, it reveals that there are thousands of older children who are finally able to attend school now that the conflict is over – making it difficult for teachers to work with children of different ages and different levels of literacy in one classroom. There is still much work to do – there are vast disparities in access, quality and achievement rates. For example, over 30% of children repeat grades, with only 38 percent actually finishing primary school. Of these, only 33% actually make it to secondary school.

Though there are many groups working on educational issues, there have been few structured opportunities to bring them together. The ILOPS project presented the opportunity to bring together various bodies for the first time. Our mapping was one of the first times that parents and pupils were consulted on their perspectives on the quality of education (beforehand they were mostly engaged in school building). Together, this core research team identified these key problems:

- An absence of national policy on teacher training, with no funding for on-the-job training: pre-service training dates back 20 years, during the conflict period. As a result, training is teacher-centred, not student centred, especially not towards those that were disabled and orphaned from the war.
- The need for school buildings is overwhelming: leaving 'double shifting' where teachers have two to four standards in one classroom, making one-to-one teacher-student time almost impossible.
- A lack of explicit policy on parental involvement or that of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) creates confusion on role and responsibilities of civil society in supporting education.
- Rife debates on muddled language of instruction, which switches abruptly between Kirundi and French (the official languages) and in 2007 introduced Kiswahili and English to the mix, which explains abysmal achievement rates in French and mathematics.

But the situation is looking up in Burundi. There has been recognition of the role civil society and parents can and should play in supporting education – and holding the government accountable.

Conclusions

Overall, our findings point towards a genuine 'crisis in education'. Parents in all four countries are questioning the importance of schooling and rethinking the need to invest in education, especially for girls. These attitudes are a result of the poor quality of teaching and learning; a breakdown of relationships between teachers and parents; lack of investment by the government, especially in disadvantaged districts; and a shortage of trained teachers. These findings are now common knowledge among pupils, parents, community leaders, teachers, unions, coalitions and governments who, brought together through this initiative, are finding new ways of working together to find practical solutions.

"*…The project allowed us to strengthen the networks, the partners we had, by involving them not sporadically, but systematically and with the relevant follow-up….we are now able to collectively address some of the problems we face in the education sector.*"

In-country Researcher

Collaborative research means that the process of engaging is as important as the results — the relationships, contacts and common understanding built through the partnership cannot be underestimated, and its effect will be felt for years to come. Real multi-stakeholder participation means more than consultation. People must actually come together to do the work. This is more likely to produce plans that are genuinely locally owned, relevant, evidence-based, and ultimately successful.

Look out for national research reports, policy briefs and *Reflect* guides from all four countries and comparative policy briefs on teacher quality, parental participation and learning outcomes in July 2009.

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Trying to crunch the numbers: data availability in education research in Northern Nigeria

by Andrew Mamedu

What do mice, floods, fire and termites have in common? They are some of the reasons why schools in Northern Nigeria are failing to keep adequate records of girls' enrolment, retention and completion at primary and junior secondary level. This is seriously impacting on the ability of the Nigerian government, NGOs and researchers to develop an accurate picture of the factors keeping girls out of school, and their ability to design interventions accordingly.

For the last six months, the TEGINT project has been undertaking extensive baseline research to identify barriers to girls' enrolment, retention and completion in six states in Northern Nigeria. This will allow us to develop a clear picture of the situation for girls in the states where we are working, design a more effective programme and monitor the impact of our work. CAPP has been working with the Institute for Development Research in Nigeria, and the Institute of Education in London (led by Professor Elaine Unterhalter) to gather this data. A similar exercise has been conducted in Tanzania, in conjunction with our partner Maarifa ni Ufunguo and the Bureau of Education Research and Evaluation.

Some 1,735 people were surveyed and we attempted to collect evidence from 72 schools (36 primary and 36 junior secondary) in Bauchi, Federal Capital Territory, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina and Plateau Nassarawa states. Government data shows that while enrolment rates in the South of Nigeria are often slightly higher for girls than boys, in the Northern states girls' enrolment is consistently lower. While no definitive figure has been found, some 5-10 million Nigerian children are not enrolled in primary or junior secondary school.

While no definitive figure has been found, some 5-10 million Nigerian children are not enrolled in primary or junior secondary school.

While we managed to collect some valuable data, including girls' and boys' reasons for not attending school, girls' ambition levels and fee charging structures for all the schools, we were seriously hampered by the lack of data available in most schools with which to cross-reference our findings. Most schools kept no data at all on enrolment or attendance levels. If this data had been kept it was stored incredibly badly. Our team of enumerators found records that had been eaten by termites, mice and rats, that had been damaged by damp and floods, or that had critical data simply missing, making them unusable.

Gideon Mendel/Corbis/ActionAid

This makes it impossible for us to substantiate what both schools and Federal government are telling us about enrolment, retention and transition in Nigeria. Are teachers' perceptions of the relative attendance levels of boys and girls correct? Teachers assessed girls' attendance as slightly poorer than boys across all states. Similarly 53% of all teachers rated how their schools promoted girls' education as 'very well', with only 4% rating their schools' performance as 'poor'. We need to be able to look at this data in conjunction with the schools' retention data to see whether schools are doing as well as they think they are at promoting girls' education – and whether barriers then exist in the wider community.

TEGINT: *Transforming the Education of Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania* is a project supported by Comic Relief and the Tubney Charitable Trust, which seeks to achieve a transformation in the education of girls in Tanzania and Nigeria by addressing underlying gender inequalities both in school and in the community.

The project works:

- **To build the capacity of girls to challenge gender discrimination.**
- **To promote participatory modules on gender and HIV/AIDS in national pre-service and in-service teacher training**
- **To build capacity and provide ongoing support to school management committees and the wider community addressing HIV and AIDS and girls rights in education.**
- **To facilitate the development of legal and policy frameworks and good practice, that will enhance and protects girls' rights in school.**
- **To build the capacity of national NGOs – CAPP in Nigeria and Maarifa Ni Ufunguo in Tanzania – as leading national organisations in education, gender and HIV/AIDS.**

New methodology toolkit

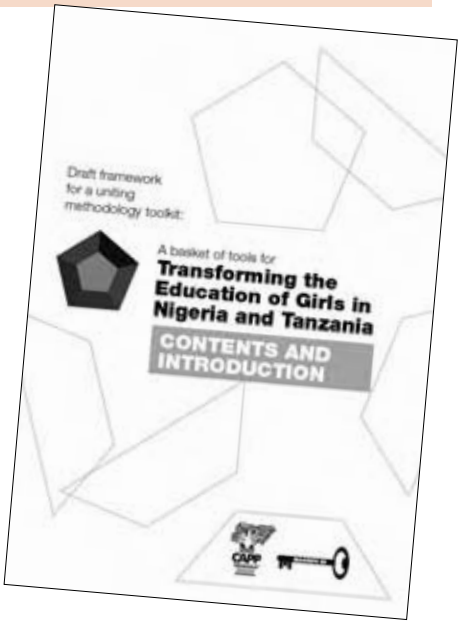
The Transforming the Education of Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania project has developed a brand new toolkit which is available to all practitioners working on gender and education. The toolkit consists of five 'modules' designed to look at how girls are considered in society, helping participants work out why girls are not in school and helping them challenge existing gender and power relations. The toolkit is designed to help facilitators work with girls, their families, teachers, community members and policy makers and discuss difficult issues. It is made up of a series of booklets that can be pulled out and used separately and are easily photocopied. Combining approaches from *Reflect*, Stepping Stones, 'Tuseme', Tiwoloke in Malawi and FAWE's Gender Responsive Schools methodology, the toolkit was designed by CAPP in Nigeria and Maarifa ni Ufunguo in both countries with the assistance of Advocacy Associates and ActionAid.

The toolkit is a 'first draft' and we plan to revise and develop it over the life of the project. We would welcome it being tested by others.

If you would like a copy, please contact Rebecca.Ingram@actionaid.org

This lack of record keeping has led to the development of wildly different levels of girls' enrolment in various reports. Our desk research showed that the 2006 MDG Report (National Planning Commission, January, 2007), states that in 1990 (when the EFA goals were adopted), for every 100 boys enrolled in primary school, there were 82 girls. By 2004, when the first Nigeria MDG Report was published, the gap had widened to 79 girls for every 100 boys. By 2005, the enrolment gap was still wider than in 1990, standing at 81 girls to every 100 boys. In the EFA and UBE National Action Plan, also published by the Nigerian government in 2007, it is reported that total primary school enrolment stood at 22,267,407, of which 9,994,361 were female, representing just 45%.

The Federal Ministry of Education admitted that in 2003 the data on enrolment and completion rates was grossly inflated prior to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) that took place in 2004. The enrolment graphs took a sharp dip from 2004, following revisions of the enrolment data after the APRM. Some commentators have said that this data was deliberately revised downwards in order to achieve a higher HDI rating. At local level,



Universal Basic Education Commission national government grants are matched by state contributions, based on enrolment levels, meaning there is a benefit for states in keeping enrolment figures high. Nigerian government agencies cannot with certainty state the extent of the gender gaps in primary school enrolments, and in addition often allege bias by international development agencies when they compile and publish data that contradicts government claims.

One key reason for this poor record keeping is that schools are not required to submit this data to federal or state governments for aggregation. This means school records are often a secondary consideration where schools are struggling to cope with poor staffing, large class sizes and sporadic funding. The contrast with schools in Tanzania, where storage of this data is mandatory – and where data is regularly collated at district and national levels – is marked. Almost all of the schools in our Tanzania study had easily available, accurate data that was verified by census counts. This data provides us with a good basis for designing the project interventions, and also means that local government is well aware of the gaps in enrolment, retention and completion, making our local level advocacy work much simpler.

Gideon Mendel/Corbis/ActionAid

Girls in Northern Nigeria are ambitious. Our data showed that 87% of girls in the project states want to go on to tertiary education, with most girls saying that this would ensure they got a better job. A huge gap remains between these girls' ambition and the number of girls currently finishing secondary school. Unless schools and government in Nigeria ensure that data is available for individual schools it will be difficult to ensure that interventions target the real causes of low enrolment, retention, transition and attainment. The TEGINT project also has an advocacy agenda, and we are now planning to take forward the issue of poor record keeping with both Federal and State governments in Nigeria.

Stop Violence against Girls in School: protecting girls' rights to and in education

by Asmara Figue

It is widely recognized that education is key to achieving sustainable human development. Governments across the world have committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals as well as targets set out in the Education for All framework, including the achievement of universal primary education by 2015, the elimination of gender disparities in primary education by 2005 and gender equality in education by 2015. However despite progress made (with 25 million fewer children out of school now than in 2000), much remains to be done, particularly with regard to girls' education. Indeed, nearly 70 countries failed to reach the goal of gender parity in education by 2005 and of the 75 million children currently out of school, approximately 60% are girls. In 2004, ActionAid undertook research in 12 countries across Africa and Asia, which demonstrated that one of the key factors keeping girls out of school is violence.

According to the research, violence on the part of peers, family members, acquaintances, teachers and others both in and on the way to and from school can include corporal punishment, sexual harassment, intimidation, coercion, rape, bullying, threats and humiliation. This issue was found to affect all girls to some extent, regardless of race, age, class or location and was cited by girls themselves as a serious reason for not attending school.

Violence against girls arises within the context of deeply ingrained structural inequalities and ideologies that perpetuate discrimination against girls and women. The impact of violence on individual girls is immeasurable and can result in loss of self confidence, guilt, stigmatisation, vulnerability to further abuse and to HIV and AIDS, absenteeism and abandonment of school. In addition to the impact of violence against girls at the individual level, it is also important to highlight the wider socio-economic consequences. Privation of education due to violence can contribute to illiteracy and poverty and, if left unchallenged, will perpetuate the cycles of violence and discrimination.

ActionAid believes that violence against girls in and around school is not just a violation of their individual rights but also a huge challenge to countries trying to achieve the goals set out in the MDGs and the EFA frameworks. In order to tackle this issue and build on the experience and expertise of different country programmes that have been developing work in this area over recent years, ActionAid recently launched a new project called Stop Violence against Girls in School.

About the project

Supported by a 5-year grant from the UK's Big Lottery Fund, the project is being carried out simultaneously in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. Whilst each country will be implementing activities slightly differently, all three will be working towards the achievement of four common outcomes. By June 2013 it is expected that:

1. In Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique, a legal and policy framework that specifically addresses violence against girls in schools exists and is being implemented at all levels;
2. Violence against girls by family members, teachers and peers in the intervention districts is reduced by 50% from baseline statistics;
3. In the intervention districts, enrolment of girls is increased by an average of 22%, girls' drop out rate decreases by an average of 20% and substantial progress is made towards gender parity in education;
4. 14,000 girls in the intervention districts report the confidence to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools.

The project, which aims to reach a total of 60 primary schools (30 in Mozambique, 13 in Ghana and 17 in Kenya) is being implemented in collaboration with eight different partners using a combination of community-based initiatives, research and advocacy in all three countries.

Community-based initiatives will serve to pilot new approaches, document and share best practice, raise awareness of the issues and mobilize stakeholders and beneficiaries to help bring about tangible, positive changes for girls in school. Activities include creating and supporting girls' clubs, working with boys and men to challenge stereotypes, providing training for school management committees, health workers and police and encouraging out of school girls to start/return to education.

Research will provide the robust evidence needed to bring about concrete changes in policy and practice and support effective monitoring and evaluation. This work will include a series of longitudinal and strategic studies across all three countries that will be undertaken with the support and coordination of the Institute of Education at the University of London. This component aims to ensure that frameworks, tools and methods are coordinated to provide comparable and rigorous evidence of violence against girls and its

Nearly 70 countries failed to reach the goal of gender parity in education by 2005 and of the million children currently out of school, approximately 60% are girls. In 2004, ActionAid undertook research in 12 countries across Africa and Asia, which demonstrated that one of the key factors keeping girls out of school is violence.

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'Community Dialogue' meeting Kilindini village

impact on their education across all three countries.

Advocacy initiatives informed by both the research and community-level work aim to raise awareness of issues, build and strengthening networks and coalitions both nationally and internationally and work to ensure that laws and policy changes that prevent violence against girls in school are implemented and applied. Activities will include revision and strengthening of legal provision aimed at protecting girls in schools, raising community awareness of existing laws and policies and how to seek redress in cases of abuse, and building and strengthening work with coalitions and networks.

By reducing violence against girls in school through the implementation of effective research, advocacy and community-level interventions in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique this project aims to improve girls' access to and performance in education, create opportunities for girls' empowerment and establish a lasting basis for the transformation of gender relations in schools and communities.

Highlights from the field

The project is already up and running in all three countries, and amongst the first activities being undertaken by ActionAid and partners in the field is the development of awareness in communities about the issues of girls' education, violence against girls and the links between the two. This is a crucial step along the difficult path towards changing what are often deeply entrenched views about gender roles and relationships and challenging the practice of different forms of violence, including harmful traditional practices such as forced marriages and female genital mutilation, which in many contexts lead to the violation of girls' rights to education and protection.

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Salim and Mwajuma

ActionAid Kenya organised a meeting in Kilindini village, a small collection of mud and thatch huts in the dry, dusty inland area of Tana River district in Kenya's Coast Province, with the aim of encouraging parents and community leaders to address the barriers to girls' education. Mwajuma Hamato Habushi (34) was one of the most outspoken women present, stating clearly her belief that education is a right for both boys and girls.

Mwajuma's strong ideas on the issue of girls' education are at the heart of her current dilemma. Her eldest daughter Sauda, aged 15 and one of four children from Mwajuma's first marriage, is currently out of school and she is desperately worried for her future. Sauda had been doing fine at school until she failed the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exam (KCPE) which would have guaranteed her progress into secondary school. Whilst in theory Sauda is allowed to take the exam again until she passes, her father will not allow her to go back to school. "*I don't know what his reasons are*" said Mwajuma "my daughter really wants to continue her education and would like us to either give her another chance at getting her KCPE or allow her to attend a computer course at a vocational training centre."

Mwajuma fears that if her daughter stays out of school she may get into trouble: "*there are all kinds of 'predators' around and she could end up straying*" she states. "Educating girls is very important" continues Mwajuma. "*I personally wish I had been able to continue my education beyond Standard 6 but my ill-health prevented me from doing so. Girls who are educated tend to focus more on providing support for their family and their communities. As parents we need to sit with our children and talk to them about respect and provide them with guidance and counselling. Parents also need educated children to support them in the future. I hope to see my daughters grow up to be teachers and doctors one day.*"

With help from ActionAid's staff in the field, Mwajuma hopes that a meeting with her former husband, mediated by the chief's of both Kilindini and her husband's village will bring about positive results and enable her daughter Sauda to return to school and continue her education.

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Women from Kilindini village involved in 'Community Dialogue' meetings

In Kenya the project team has initiated a series of 'Community Dialogue' meetings, in which parents, elders and traditional leaders meet to discuss the issues the project is seeking to tackle, including barriers to girls' education. These meetings also provide space for airing some of the very different views that exist within communities, about the value of girls' education, the importance of recognizing equal rights for girls and boys, and the role of good parental support and guidance in ensuring girls are able to access and complete education. In some cases, both women and men are publicly outspoken about their beliefs in the importance of ensuring girls' right to education is met. It is this momentum that the project will seek to build on as it continues to encourage adults within the communities to understand the causes and consequences of violence against girls and its impact on their access to and achievement in school, and develops strategies that will help more girls go to and stay in school and ensure more cases of violence are reported and the perpetrators brought to justice.

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Nepal gets DRR on the curriculum

by John Abuya,
International Project Manager, Disaster Risk Reduction through Schools Project

After over a year of intense lobbying and networking, ActionAid Nepal and its partners, the Disaster Preparedness Network (DpNET) and the Centre for Policy Research and Consultancy (CPReC), finally achieved the formal inclusion of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the education curriculum. DRR was integrated in three compulsory subjects for Grades 9 and 10 (ages 14-17): social studies, science, and health, population and environment. This involved adding new topics on disaster risk reduction and rewriting existing topics from the point of view of disaster management.

The ActionAid *Disaster Risk Reduction through Schools* project (2005-2010) covers seven countries and aims to make schools in high-risk disasters areas safer. It is working to make schools the focus of disaster risk reduction and to institutionalize the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) within education systems. The project has strategic links with international partners including the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, UNESCO and the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University.

Reviewing the curriculum

CPReC has been ActionAid Nepal's partner for eight years, and started engaging with the DRRS project in 2007, working directly with SMCs and PTAs in 500 schools in 65 districts in Nepal. In collaboration with CPReC and the CDC, the Nepal DRRS project took the lead in engaging on DRR the curriculum. This was timed to coincide with the curriculum revision calendar, with considerable effort going towards raising awareness amongst the various stakeholders.

The process involved reviewing the existing curriculum, textbooks, exam questions and teacher guides for the five core subjects: Nepali, science, social studies, maths, and health, population & environment. The training of CDC officers was also reviewed. The review also made a comparative study of 13 other countries. The research revealed that only 5% of subject content related to disasters, and even then it was not directly relevant to local contexts. The final report and findings were discussed with government and other stakeholders and led to the successful revision of the curriculum for core subjects for Grades 9-10. Disaster-related topics were added around floods, earthquakes and climate change. Indicators were also developed

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Presentations by children at Chariyami secondar school

In 2007, together with national partners the project started raising awareness amongst communities and key stakeholders in Nepal about the Hyogo Framework for Action, setting up the Nepal DRR National Platform and lobbying for a Disaster Management Act. The partners also raised awareness about the impact of climate change and promoted a building code for school safety. Specific work on the curriculum involved a review of the existing curriculum, identifying gaps, developing content and making recommendations to the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC).

for monitoring implementation in schools.

Lessons learned

- Concerned people in government must be highly sensitized and involved right from the beginning.
- Formal partnerships with government should be made by way of MOU or other binding mechanisms.
- The process should link with the curriculum revision cycle and calendar.
- The curriculum review must be the people's agenda through popular participation.
- All stakeholders and subject experts should be involved.
- Disaster management experts should be involved to help prepare locally-relevant content.

The Director of the CDC commended the proactive role of ActionAid and partners in engaging with and successfully influencing government.

Way forward

A recent study commissioned by ActionAid to review existing education policies and make recommendations on how to strengthen donor support for DRR revealed a grim picture. The study reviewed twenty national education sector plans (ESPs), as submitted to and approved by the FTI, to analyze those countries' approach to DRR. The ESPs reviewed were all countries at risk of disaster. Overwhelmingly, these ESPs omitted mention of disaster risk management, disaster risk reduction, and disaster mitigation strategies. Surprisingly, even some chronically food-insecure countries such as Ethiopia did not include DRR strategies in their ESPs. On the whole, references to disaster were largely relegated to background information.

A lot of work still needs to be done to ensure that DRR gets its rightful space in the education sector if the Hyogo Framework for Action and especially Priority 3 on knowledge and education are to be realised. This requires efforts to ensure that DRR is included both in education sector plans and in the curriculum.

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PowerDown

by Janet Convery

PowerDown – a new climate change toolkit for schools, brings to life some of the causes and impacts of climate change, and explores the extraordinary potential for schools in developed countries to shape some of the solutions.

Developed from an education partnership across seven countries: Austria, Czech Republic, England, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Thailand, the aim is to enable learners to:

- understand the impacts of extreme weather, such as floods and droughts, which are brought to life through the stories of children living in vulnerable communities
- investigate energy use at home and in school, and how this is linked to extreme weather events thousands of miles away
- explore how small changes in the day-to-day running of schools can have a positive impact on life in developing countries.

Prashant Panjiar/OnAsia/ActionAid

Guarding against snakes

"I'm Zakire Hussain. I live with my family in Assam, India. I am seven years old.

Before the floods came I helped build a bamboo platform in my home. When the floods came we stayed on this for ten days.

It was Friday evening when a snake climbed onto our platform. I got a stick and hit the snake. It fell back into the water. When my father saw how I protected my family, he asked me to be on snake duty. I beat three more snakes that night."

Assam has experienced extreme flooding in recent years. Zakir has been working with ActionAid as part of a Disaster Risk Reduction project in schools.

Although it is difficult to link specific incidents of extreme weather to climate change, it is the overall trend in the pattern of droughts, floods and storms, which provides the evidence of a climate already changing. For the communities featured in the pack the ravages of weather are a reality they are learning to adapt to on an every day basis. For others it is a taste of the future.

'Learner-centred action' lies at the heart of PowerDown. Lesson plans follow a simple, three-step approach: learn, investigate, act. Photo cards, activity sheets and video footage accompany each step.

It offers:

- real and relevant learning – connecting learning to the world beyond the classroom
- clear learning outcomes – relating particularly to citizenship, geography and science
- a compelling learning experience – encouraging confident and responsible learners.

Trigger photos
Trigger photos is a *Learn activity*. Like many other toolkit activities it is simple in concept and can be easily adapted to different classes and topic areas. Photos can be used for many purposes, for example to explore learners' preconceptions of an issue or place, or to investigate causes and solutions in more depth. Once learners have had an opportunity to study the front of the photo card, they are asked to read the text on the back.

- Select an image showing the impacts of climate change and place it in the centre of the activity sheet, and respond to the questions surrounding it.
- What is happening in your picture?
- Do you think it could have anything to do with climate change?
- Read the back of your card.
- What have you found out about your picture?
- How does it make you feel?
- What does it make you think?
- What does it make you want to ask?
- What is the most important thing you want to tell the class about the picture?

Students and teachers at Ashley school are pioneers in cutting their carbon emissions. A screen in the centre of the school continuously monitors energy consumption. The resulting data is used in lessons, enabling learners to become 'energy literate' with impressive results. The school electricity bill has been reduced by 50% in one year.

"We found out that Monday was the worst day because teachers needed to make photocopies for our lessons. So the energy monitors have challenged the teachers to try to photocopy less and find alternative ways to teach us."

Nathan age 10

Investigate
PowerDown does not cover the science of climate change in detail but provides enough basic information for learners to understand the connection between energy use and global warming. For primary age students, there are activities to help them track down 'energy thieves', at home and at school. For secondary learners, per capita carbon emissions in different parts of the world are explored. Activities help the students to debate issues of climate justice and carbon rationing.

Act – Be the solution
By studying some of the local, national and global solutions to climate change, learners are encouraged to discuss, plan and create their own climate change solutions. Analysing and planning actions are supported by familiar visualisation tools such as the 'action-card game', matrices and planning 'trees'.

For vulnerable communities living on the climate change front-line, the solutions are about adapting to climate change. For those living in countries with the biggest carbon footprints, the solutions involve cutting carbon emissions (mitigation).

Prashant Panjiar/OnAsia/ActionAid

In the village of Borbori, Assam, India, a volunteer demonstrates how empty bottles can be used to make a life jacket.

ActionAid

Thousands of people including local schools make a NO in protest at plans to build a new runway at Heathrow, London. Air travel is the fastest growing sector of carbon emissions in the UK.

PowerDown was developed with the help of 30 schools in the UK and is rooted in current classroom practice. Some of the schools involved, including the Karachua Bori school in Assam, have been included in new government guidance to schools on teaching about sustainable development. The highly visual and story-led approach is popular with teachers and the pack has already started to pick up awards.

There are two versions of the toolkit: one for primary learners (5-11 years) and one to support secondary learners (11-16 years). They can be ordered or downloaded free of charge from www.actionaid.org.uk/powerdown

Connecting people and knowledge: The Right to Education Project

by Peter Hyll-Larsen

First established by the late Katarina Tomaševski (former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education) and re-launched in 2008, the Right to Education Project is an unprecedented collaborative initiative between ActionAid, Amnesty International and the Global Campaign for Education. In December 2008, on the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the website www.right-to-education.org was re-launched.

How can governments, donors and civil society act to address the paradox whereby an increasingly globally connected and affluent world fails to meet even minimal universal obligations on the right to education, to check patterns of back-tracking, and to bridge the gap between rights and reality? The answer in part lies in promoting advocacy, mobilisation and activism, demanding compliance with human rights law.

To enable this, the Right to Education Project offers tools to make the law more accessible to those who work with education rights every day. It does so by linking a widespread recognition of constitutional and public law on education with a hands-on approach to education rights and by connecting those who work for education rights from different perspectives in order to maximise impact. The Project has three main pillars: a website, an advisory panel of world-class experts and an ambitious research agenda.

Our website

Relaunched in December 2008, the website www.right-to-education.org is guided by the principle of the 4As, which *Katarina Tomaševski* identified as the main components for the fulfilment of all education rights: Availability, Accessibility, Adaptability and Acceptability. With an entirely new design and a much broader scope of resources and tools than hitherto, this website provides the foundation and platform for all the other activities of the Project. It is a unique resource aimed at sharing knowledge, promoting legal accountability and supporting social mobilisation for education rights. It seeks to provide multiple entry points for users from different backgrounds, including excluded groups and individuals whose rights have been violated, human rights lawyers, academics, education campaigners and activists, teachers, and development NGOs.

We are trying to address a very wide and diverse audience, and have many different resources. Some to introduce the right to education, some to identify or address violations; some looking at excluded groups, some looking at education financing; some for social mobilisation, some for taking a legal route, some looking at the local and national level, some at the regional and international level. This is all work in progress and will need updating as long as there are violations of the right to education out there. Please do visit and share with your colleagues and fellow campaigners!

The Right to Education Project will undertake innovative research over the coming years, starting with a unique approach to defining indicators of education rights.

Our experts

To take its work forward the Right to Education Project has convened an International Advisory Panel that involves leading scholars, human rights activists and education campaigners, all serving in their personal capacity. Current panel members are: Akanksha Marphatia, Amina Ibrahim, Angela Melchiorre, Camilla Croso Silva, Christian Courtis, Christopher Colclough, Colm Ó Cuanacháin, David Archer, Duncan Wilson, John Packer, Lucia Fry, Nevena Vučković-Šahović, Penina Mlama, and Sheldon Shaeffer.

This panel provides an invaluable source of strategic advice for the website, for developing a research agenda, facilitating outreach in different regions and through different networks, ensuring high levels of accuracy and professionalism, and providing cutting edge analysis to steer the project. It meets once a year to reflect on the state of the right to education and discuss the way we should be going. In 2009, the Panel will concentrate on indicators for the measurement of the right to education.

RIGHTtoEDUCATION project

promoting mobilisation and legal accountability

www.right-to-education.org

Our research

The Right to Education Project will undertake innovative research over the coming years, starting with a unique approach to defining indicators of education rights. These will be based on existing legal provisions, re-figured in light of the 4As (Availability, Accessibility, Adaptability and Acceptability). They will also cover the full EFA agenda rather than the limited view that the MDGs offer on education, ignoring ECCE, life-long learning and adult literacy. The findings of this research will be shared, amongst others, with the UN Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the national coalitions of The Global Campaign for Education, the EFA Global Monitoring Report and the Fast Track Initiative, as well as academic institutions and civil society organisations.

This exciting and much needed project on the indicators for the right to education will move to a second and third phase in 2009 and 2010, with a worldwide consultation and extensive field-testing. This is essential, because ultimately the aim is to create a practical tool, through the outreach of the website and development partners, and to support other human rights impact assessment tools. Other research projects are similarly being mapped out against the 4As framework and the international human rights and development agendas.

Knowing your constitution

Perhaps most impressive of all the website's features is the only comprehensive constitutional database on education rights in the world. This is the jewel in the crown: a unique resource documenting the level of protection in 192 countries. Here the right to education has been identified (or found to be missing!) in the fundamental legal text of your country – the constitution.

Why is this important? Because the state is the central actor in any claim to the right to education, it is the prime duty-bearer, the prime implementer, the signatory and guarantor of international norms and standards that bind it to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education. The state must therefore be judged or challenged on this central text on the right to education. The constitution is the fundamental law of the country, reflecting the underlying and unifying values of society. It spells out the basic rights of each person; it serves as a framework for all other laws and policies. Though it cannot and should not be easily changed, it is important to keep it alive, by popularising and using it, and by campaigning for its democratic reform or amendment if necessary.

Connecting people

The Right to Education Project sees its foremost aim as bringing people and knowledge together for democratic reform and advocacy. The three main pillars of the project as outlined above – website, panel and research – therefore all aspire to support such action. We are very aware that no one model fits all in addressing violations of the right to education or the lack of knowledge about education rights. Both our research agenda and the many tools and resources of the website are thus designed to guide people and organisations to the approach that best fits their specific challenges. We have pages on mobilisation at local, national and international level, linked to a database of organisations and action for each country.

We aspire to connect individuals with networks of lawyers and human rights defenders, and we try to guide people on the pros and cons of litigation as a tool for social mobilisation, making the best use of the strange but highly sophisticated and highly rewarding world of laws, norms and standards.

To view the website go to: www.right-to-education.org

Follow the money and read the law!

by David Archer

"Do existing human rights commitments go far enough to ensure that all children get the education they need?"

At the re-launch of the website www.right-to-education.org leading experts were asked to address this question. The following is a summary of the response of David Archer, Head of International Education at ActionAid:

Sophia Evans/NB Pictures/ActionAid

Angelica Da Silva from Brazil does some homework.

Put simply the answer must be NO. Human rights commitments – or at least their interpretation and use – clearly are not going far enough. There are still 75 million children out of school and many more children in overcrowded classrooms with under-qualified and overwhelmed teachers. Yet the fault may not lie with the human rights commitments but rather with how the international community and activists have used, abused or ignored these commitments. The dominant reference points for most education activists are Jomtien, Dakar and the MDGs – none of which has any legally binding status.

If we are to be serious about ensuring all children can enjoy their right to education the first thing needed is more financing, both from national governments and from the international community. Promises of course have been made repeatedly – most recently at the UN General

Assembly in 2008 and the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in 2005, but the most widely quoted is no doubt the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 where the framework for action, the EFA Goals, declared that no government seriously committed to achieving education goals would be allowed to fail for lack of resources…if they have a credible plan.

Legal commitments

This seemed like a significant step – and education campaigners celebrated it as a victory. But in fact this is a faint, non-legally binding echo of a much stronger commitment made in 1966 in the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This extremely important human rights treaty clearly states that "…each state party to the present covenant undertakes to take steps individually and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures".

Article 14 of this same covenant also says that each state party that has not achieved "compulsory primary education, free of charge, undertakes within two years to work out and adopt a detailed plan of action for progressive implementation within a reasonable number of years".

The question is how can we use these legally binding commitments, made by 160 governments in the world, to progressively realise the right to education to the maximum of available resources? They are undoubtedly much more powerful than EFA and MDG frameworks, but at the same time they are less known and less used. However, knowledge is one thing, use is another, and there is no doubt that many states are also very cautious of referring to legally binding obligations for fear of being held accountable. The more non-committal and politically 'free' EFA goals are a safer option.

However, there is a growing understanding of how we, as civil society, can use these legal instruments to make sure that governments live up to their commitment. Clearly some strong foundations are being built, not least through the work of national education coalitions who now routinely work to demystify government budgets and track their delivery in practice, down to the school level. It is important that this work has strong international reference points so that judgements can be made on whether any particular government is doing as much as it can.

Two key reference points have become popularised in recent years as accepted international benchmarks. Governments should spend at least 20% of national budgets on education and 6% of GDP should be invested in education. If a government spends less or reduces its percentage allocation to education it is violating the commitment to progressively realise education rights using the maximum of available resources. If it reduces spending in real terms year on year it is also violating this commitment.

Watch out for a Toolkit on Education Financing, which aims to support national campaigning on these issues – to be published by ActionAid and Education International in September 2009

International assistance

And what about international assistance, also very clearly referred to in the text of the ICESCR: "*and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical*"? Are donors delivering on their side of the bargain? No! Presently only about $3.5 billion a year in aid goes to education compared to estimated need of $16 billion. In 2002 the EFA Fast Track Initiative was formed, bringing together 30 bilateral and multilateral donors in a collective effort to deliver on the Dakar commitment. However, nowhere near enough money is being pledged and the FTI is overly dependent on contributions from just two bi-lateral sources: the Netherlands and the UK.

Moreover, the FTI tends to under-estimate resource gaps, focusing only on the gaps when supporting approved country plans (just $1 billion), which fails to capture the bigger picture. More seriously, the World Bank as the host agency for FTI is using its so-called 'fiduciary responsibilities' to impose new conditionalities, even after plans have been approved by donors. This has seriously blocked disbursement of funds. Some of the conditions, for example around procurement, even undermine the capacity of Ministries of Education to make reasoned decisions themselves.

Challenging IMF policies

There are however even more serious constraints to mobilising resources for education. The truth is that Ministries of Education have little control over the education budget. Ministries of Finance set the education budget and do so based not on the need to progress towards education goals, legally defined or even just political benchmarks, but rather based on concerns for macro-economic stability.

The definitions of macro-economic stability used are directly imposed or influenced by the International Monetary Fund. The IMF places low inflation and low deficit targets as central goals or golden rules – often as absolute conditions. These make it difficult to increase spending on education even if education goals are set as national priorities. The IMF also uses short term frameworks, focusing on three to five years, within which education spending is seen purely as consumption – a bottomless pit of spending. A longer-term timeframe could allow ministries to factor in the long term productive gains from education spending – which are

realised when children grow up and enter the workforce.

There have been successes in challenging some of the more obvious policies of the IMF where they impact on education spending. For example, the IMF backed down from using public sector wage bill caps when it became clear that these were blocking recruitment of teachers and health workers. But limits to teacher numbers will remain whilst other elements of the standard IMF package remain in place.

In conclusion, if we are to ensure that existing human rights commitments lead to a situation where all children get the education they need we must get serious about removing the constraints to education financing. Particularly we need to increase:

- The SIZE of the budget overall (demand Ministries of Finance resist IMF ideology).
- The SHARE of the budget to education (at least 20%).
- The SENSITIVITY of the budget to policy priorities/rights of excluded groups (end discrimination).
- The SCRUTINY of the budget – so we know what is happening at national and local levels.
- Our SKILLS in understanding budgets/economic literacy and relating these to human right commitments – so we can do all the above.

People have a RIGHT to see that their government is progressively realising their rights to education, and that the international community lives up to its obligations. These unequivocal entitlements are embedded in international conventions ratified around the world, and echoed in most national constitutions (look at what your own constitution says at www.right-to-education.org). It is time for us to hold governments to account for delivering on these rights – and the IMF and UN for not obstructing. The best place to start is to know your rights and begin to follow the money!

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The right to education vs. human capital

by María Ron Balsera

There are two conflicting trends in education. On the one hand, education is seen as promoting equality of opportunity and upward mobility through the 'levelling of the playing field'. The right to education combines this progressive approach with the development of human personality and social development. On the other hand, schools have traditionally reproduced the unequal, hierarchical relations of the nuclear family and the capitalist workplace. Recently education has been linked to the idea of investment through the human capital discourse. This perspective emphasises the benefits of education for economic growth.

The constant struggle between these two trends produces diverse ways of understanding education, the state's role in providing education, educational policies and the right to education. It seems that neoliberal governmentality – the application of the rational economic action to the social sphere – has impregnated education with the new human capital discourse. Consequently, the idea of education as a human right is being weakened.

My argument is that the discourse of education as human capital in the knowledge economy is not only different to the idea of education as a human right, but also often contrary:

Education as a right	Education as a commodity
■ requires a welfare state	■ requires a free market
■ implies individuals entitled to rights and governmental provision	■ understands individuals as consumers under the 'entrepreneurial-self' framework
■ promotes equality of opportunity by levelling the playing field	■ fosters competition, rate of return and efficiency without considering individuals' genetic and socioeconomic backgrounds
■ holds that the responsibility to provide education falls with the government	■ holds that individuals are to be held accountable for their own choices within a privatized market, which produces actuarial schemes
■ works to meet the needs of democracy	■ understands that education should meet business requirements
■ has the full development of the human personality as a goal	■ aims to improve the economy by producing highly skilled flexible workers with skills in management, information handling, communication, problem solving and decision-making

The constant link between education and economic growth portrays education as an investment to be judged by its rate of return. However, economic growth does not often result in poverty reduction. Likewise, education is not always profitable in terms of economic investment; following this logic, unprofitable groups would be excluded from access to good quality education. It is only through the appeal to education as a human right that we can justify not only access to education but **good quality** education for all children.

It is therefore crucial that education is reconceived as a right and basic need. Education as a human right should never be undermined by education's connection with economic growth. This is only a side effect of its implementation and there are many cases where fulfilling this right is not economically profitable, at least in the short term. The right to education was born with a progressive promise of reducing inequalities, allowing humanity to flourish, promoting a culture of peace, respect and understanding; and this is what the goal of education should be.

TIWOLOKE: HIV and AIDS and education in Malawi

by Dhianaraj Chetty (IET), Lawrence Khonyongwa (ActionAid Malawi), Boaz Mandula and Baina Mussa (Tiwoloke Project Team)

Teachers in Malawi, a country in the midst of a mature HIV epidemic, are setting the pace in the response to HIV and AIDS in education in Africa. TIWOLOKE, a flagship programme implemented in partnership between the Malawi Ministry of Education, DfID and ActionAid Malawi, has enrolled increasingly large numbers of teachers in a behaviour change programme and supported the development of Africa's second largest network of teachers living with HIV and AIDS. Despite some successes in mobilizing children and schools in HIV education programmes over the past decade, these developments amongst teachers in Malawi signal a key shift in how teachers manage their personal and professional lives in the context of HIV and AIDS.

In 2003/4 UNICEF, ActionAid Malawi and the Malawi Ministry of Education initiated a pilot project focused on HIV and AIDS behaviour change among teachers. TIWOLOKE was subsequently developed in 2005 in an attempt to scale up the pilot project with funding support from DfID. In the education sector, the challenge was to reach an estimated 35,000 teachers and 22,600 spouses, which was roughly 78% of teachers in service. From 2001 onwards, evidence from various sources showed impacts of the epidemic on the public service; attrition rates were too high and teachers did not have the personal skills they needed to deal with HIV and AIDS.

Why teachers and why a workplace intervention?

In most developing countries, teachers represent the largest number of employees in the public service and account for the largest share of the public sector wage bill. More importantly, notwithstanding decades of change in curriculum, instructional technology and materials, teachers are the most valuable input into the classroom. As such, along with students, they represent the core of any education system. In too many cases, programmes targeted at teachers have concentrated only on their professional identity and competence – that is, can the teacher effectively deliver the AIDS education curriculum. As a consequence, teachers' personal identity and skills have been neglected. Both personal and professional skills are equally important in AIDS education and TIWOLOKE gives teachers the space to safely explore and develop their personal needs.

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Why behaviour change?

TIWOLOKE sets a benchmark in the African context as one of the largest public sector workplace interventions and by specifically addressing behaviour change amongst teachers and their partners across the education system. The behaviour change model is based primarily on the Stepping Stones (HIV and AIDS training package) approach with some adaptations for the Malawi context. It comprises 21 modules over a period of two weeks of contact time during the school holidays. Once the training is completed, Primary Education Advisors do some follow-up with the trainees.

It's important to note that there are now well established comparable programmes elsewhere. For example, Teachers Matter in Kenya, a programme implemented by the Teachers Service Commission and its partners, and PCTA in South Africa, a programme implemented by the Education Labour Relations Council and its trade union stakeholders. In Kenya the emphasis is on peer-led change involving 1,700 teachers whereas in South Africa PCTA has targeted 7,500 teachers through peer education and 2,300 teachers and spouses for access to treatment.

Reaching teachers

By 2009, an estimated 13,000 teachers had been trained through TIWOLOKE, including 900 trainers across the targeted education districts in Malawi. Overall, the programme has reached 19 out of Malawi's 34 education districts. Of these trained teachers, an estimated 5,000 have also made the choice to take an HIV test. Despite the very positive signs of change, there are dynamics in the way teachers respond to HIV and AIDS that remain a challenge. Two issues are especially important: (1) stigma and (2) gender. Though far smaller in number than countries like Kenya or South Africa, the response by Malawian teachers to disclosing their HIV status is remarkable in many respects. Since its inception in June 2007, T'LIPO, the national network of teachers living positively with HIV and AIDS has gained a membership of 3,500 members across the country. In size it is almost as large as KENEPOTE, its Kenyan counterpart that has been in existence for longer. This rapid mobilization in Malawi and the determination of teachers living with HIV to challenge the prevailing culture of secrecy should have

translated into a dramatic change in stigma. It has and it hasn't. T'LIPO members still have to campaign against the less visible practices in education which result in their members being given lower classes to teach, moved or transferred out of their schools.

Teachers, gender, HIV and AIDS

It's no coincidence that the two most successful networks of teachers living positively with HIV and AIDS in Africa are dominated and led by women members. Both T'LIPO and KENEPOTE, have remarkably similar appeal amongst women and point to a gendered dynamic in these organisations that has implications for strategies and programmes aimed at reaching teachers. With a few exceptions, T'LIPO's branches are predominantly female in membership. For example, at one of the bigger branches Lilongwe Urban, out of a total membership of 384 members only 19 are male. KENEPOTE's membership too is roughly 75% female. This pattern is replicated in the broader movement of people living positively with HIV in Malawi – an estimated 85% of NAPHAM's (Malawi's national network of people living positively with HIV and AIDS) members are women.

In Malawi, women teachers living with HIV believe their successes in organising spring from common ground. Women are more willing and confident to take an HIV test and disclose their status. They rely on, invest in and take leadership of solidarity networks and organisations that sustain and represent people living positively with HIV. Women see themselves as more resilient than men and more capable of responding to stigma and discrimination. Women leaders have also developed a 'political voice', which is not represented elsewhere in an education system dominated by men.

Whilst the gender profile of T'LIPO is evidence of a very positive trend in terms of reaching women, it also highlights the challenge of reaching men and the dynamics of masculinity. It's by no means a problem that is unique to education systems. Masculinities are known to play a major part in determining the efficacy of prevention, care, support and treatment strategies. Evidence points to common concerns about the risk profile of male teachers, particularly the way in which their behaviour increases the vulnerability of women and girls in their lives. Of these behaviours: multiple sexual partners, sexual relationships with female students, other forms of sexual abuse and heavy use of alcohol during leisure time are all connected to prevailing norms of masculinity in Malawi social life.

Gideon Mendel/Corbis/ActionAid

Malawian midwife educating women about preventing transmission of HIV.

An integrated response

It's often a challenge to find a response to HIV and AIDS that is well integrated into the mainstream of work done by and through ministries of education. TIWOLOKE has gone some way towards that objective. Teachers living positively with HIV and AIDS are now represented by a coordinator based at a resource centre in the Ministry, a development which enables better access to decision makers as well as recognition by donors and national level stakeholders working in the area of HIV and AIDS. One recent sign of this shift is the entitlement that positive teachers now have to subsidized fertilizer supplies to assist their farms and food gardens. The Input Subsidy Programme, as it is known, provides a subsidized supply of fertilizer to Malawi's poorest households of around US$6. This should go a long way towards improving food security for positive teachers in a context where overall food security is often threatened by droughts and shortages.

What have we learned from TIWOLOKE?

- Though the intervention attempts to address the inequalities between men and women teachers, we need a better understanding of how these are affecting the lives of women teachers and more deliberate actions that address these inequalities in the context of women and AIDS.
- Despite their successes to date, organisations such as T'LIPO need to find ways to reach men more effectively to trigger lasting change in gender relations. This is particularly true in a society that has yet to challenge its patriarchal institutional arrangements and social norms. Without a strategy for engaging men and challenging gender inequality, the fundamental dynamics of the epidemic will not be addressed.
- ActionAid's research has shown that sexual harassment, rape and other forms of violence against girls in schools are a persistent problem in education, no less so in Malawi. Any intervention in the context of HIV and AIDS like TIWOLOKE has to show a measurable change in these practices and the impacts on girls and women.
- Teachers living positively with HIV and AIDS are clearly beginning to challenge rights violations in the workplace and in their communities. At the same time, they are claiming their rights to treatment and dignity. Interventions like TIWOLOKE need to be re-enforced through policy interventions that redress and secure these rights in the long term.
- Finally, governments must remain accountable for their responsibility in providing access to quality care, support, and services. The experience of teachers in Malawi highlights the power of organised civil society movements as a vehicle for achieving these changes, beyond individual behaviour change interventions.

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The Politics of Prevention: A global crisis in AIDS and education

by Tania Boler and David Archer. Published by Pluto Press, 2008

Preventing HIV has become so political that young people are being denied their right to life saving education. This is one of the clear messages from a new book that looks at the inter-connected crises in education and in HIV.

The Politics of Prevention is written at a time when there are still about 7,000 new infections every day, which is absurd in a context where we know how to prevent HIV. There is no great mystery in prevention and yet stigma surrounding HIV means that over 80% of people living with HIV do not know they have the virus. Stigma is particularly acute with HIV because those who are most affected (women in Africa, drug users, men who sleep with men) already suffer from discrimination within society. In many cases, HIV builds on and multiplies pre-existing discrimination.

Schools make a difference

Education clearly has a role to play here in that schools are supposed, at least theoretically, to be safe environments in which discrimination should be challenged rather than perpetuated. Of course, this is sometimes easier said than done. What is clear though is that schools do make a difference. Just going to school and staying in school saves lives – especially in respect of girls and where girls stay on into secondary education (see *Girl Power*, ActionAid 2006). The reasons for this are less clear. It may be about the confidence or empowerment that come with education, or that school going children are more likely to engage in sexual relationships with their own age group (rather than with older men). It is also very clear that most parents want their children to learn about HIV and AIDS. This often surprises people because the minority of parents who oppose this are often more vocal. However, research in India and Kenya showed that 85% of parents expect schools to act (see *Sound of Silence*, ActionAid 2004). As one adolescent commented, "*Most parents feel embarrassed to discuss AIDS with their children so they like us learning about it at school*".

Unfortunately, we also know that most Ministries of Education are not responding. An analysis across 20 countries conducted by the GCE in 2005 showed that whilst most Ministries have good policies on paper, little happens in practice in schools. HIV may even make its way into textbooks and learning materials but these are rarely used because teachers are not being trained. They may sometimes be invited to a one-day course. However, to take on a sensitive issue, where their own values and behaviours may be directly challenged, that is not enough for them to develop the confidence to teach about HIV.

What is clear though is that schools do make a difference. Just going to school and staying in school saves lives – especially in respect of girls and where girls stay on into secondary education.

Inspiring stories

It is important not to be pessimistic. The book documents countless examples where people and organisations are making a difference. For example, there is *Theatre for a Change* in Ghana, which uses theatre to challenge and change the attitudes of teachers, engaging them emotionally. There are remarkable stories about individuals such as Kwanjai's teacher in Thailand who transformed the life of a positive child. The book also tells the story of Kndlimuka in Mozambique, where positive youth engage in schools to transform learning processes in lunchtime and after-school clubs. It is important also to look beyond schools, for example at the work of Soul Buddyz in South Africa, where a TV soap opera for young children broke taboos and inspired a generation with positive role models. Adult learning is also important and the experiences of using the *Reflect* approach with different age and sex groups to break the culture of silence are touched on. These experiences are inspired by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire who was also the catalyst for a movement of sex workers in Brazil that empowered some of the most marginalized groups.

From these experiences and others, it is clear that prevention education can work in schools and outside of schools. There are certain core elements that are key to success. Prevention education works when it respects children's right to accurate, non-judgemental and age-appropriate information and when it is comprehensive and uses participatory methods to actively engage people. It is essential that prevention education does not shy away from talk of sex and that it actively seeks to address gender and power dynamics, challenging discrimination and stigma. Perhaps most of all, prevention education programmes work where there is proper investment in training and supporting teachers.

Obstacles to prevention

Unfortunately, a series of obstacles prevent effective prevention. Most obviously, there is a crisis in education. There are **75 million out of school** and these are amongst the most vulnerable young people, most likely to engage in cross-generational or transactional sex. Whilst children still have to pay to go to primary school in many countries around the world, it is not surprising that so many do not go. Nor is it surprising that children drop out if they are crammed into a room with 100 other children and a teacher who can only maintain order through intimidation and violence. If we know that teachers need training to deal with HIV effectively this is a serious problem in countries that continually downgrade training and the status of the teaching profession. Some powerful voices in the World Bank think that teachers in Africa do not need training and that governments should go for the cheap labour option of employing three untrained teachers instead of one trained teacher. This makes a mockery

of attempts to give a meaningful educational response to HIV and AIDS.

A second serious obstacle to effective prevention that the book identifies is that the United Nations system is disempowered in its response to HIV. There is a dependency on consensus-based approaches and the result is neutered programmes that do not address issues clearly and honestly. Anything controversial is simply left out. The UNICEF Life Skills programme fits into this mould – it has proved very popular with governments because they can feel as if they are doing something about HIV…and yet can get away without any mention of sex. It is essential to recognise that it is hard to get full consensus on sensitive issues and that sometimes a positive stand needs to be taken against a falsely moralizing minority.

Perhaps one of the most important ways in which effective HIV prevention has been undermined has been the rise of religious forces that completely ignore and even directly undermine science. Most visible is the abstinence-only movement in the United States. This emerged after George Bush came to power in 2000. Under pressure to reward the loyalty of his electoral base (the evangelical churches) he closed down federal funding for sex education and set up widespread schemes to support evangelical churches to go into public schools under the cover of HIV/public health. Their real intentions were of course very different – to save souls not lives. The book documents the lies told by these evangelical courses, which say only abstinence works and that condoms are designed to fail. The problem is that all the scientific studies on these courses show that within two years of pledging themselves to abstain from sex, teenagers are just as active sexually as any others. The only difference is that they no longer believe condoms work, so they have unprotected sex and are thus vulnerable to higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases.

This is bad enough in the United States were prevalence rates are low, but exporting these same approaches around the world is positively dangerous. The US government of Bush did this for many years, conditioning vast amounts of aid on organisations pledging to use abstinence only approaches and banning aid from going to any organisations that promoted condoms or provided abortion services. The damage done through these policies is difficult to estimate but, thankfully, one of the first policies passed by President Obama in early 2009 overturned these conditions. Let us hope that it does not take too long to filter down to the ground and that the damage already done is not too great.

"David Archer and Tania Boler have given us a wonderful investigation of the ways and means of fighting the spread of AIDS through the expansion of education: better schooling, enhancement of public knowledge, understanding of science. With their rich collection of empirical studies, they show that the newest of the perils facing humanity (viz. AIDS) can be powerfully confronted by the oldest of human endeavours (viz. education)."

Amartya Sen,
Nobel Prize-winning
Professor of Economics and Philosophy,
Harvard University

Another obstacle to effective prevention of HIV can be tracked to the discredited ideology of the IMF, which has actively undermined investment in education and health systems. Deficit and low inflation targets restrict budgets unnecessarily, based on unsubstantiated and fundamentalist views of how economies must run (see other articles in this magazine). Particular problems can be seen where the IMF for many years imposed public sector wage-bill caps, affecting the two most important groups of workers – teachers and health workers.

One final obstacle that the book touches on is false beliefs in targeting. There are some countries, especially in Asia and Latin America, where people believe there is no need to act generally because there is only a focused epidemic. The suggestion is made that prevention programmes should only target high-risk groups such as sex workers, men who have unprotected sex with men and injecting drug users.

"The Politics of Prevention brings together stories from around the world that explore and expose the nature of the twin crises – in education and in HIV. This timely book places the HIV epidemic in the context of wider international affairs. The realisation of rights needs to serve as the foundation for responding to the global challenges of HIV and education. The Politics of Prevention offers us real and inspiring examples of how this vision can become a reality, advancing the notion of shared responsibility for the global challenges of HIV and education."

Mary Robinson,
Former President of Ireland/
Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

This may sound sensible but the problem is that sex workers were not born as sex workers. They were children and adolescents too and it is during these years that education about HIV could make a difference. Nor were drug users born drug users. In countries where most young people are HIV-free, the challenge is to keep them that way and that means investing in comprehensive age-appropriate education.

In the conclusion to our book, we observe that the changes needed in human relations to prevent the spread of HIV resonate with the changes needed in international relations. There is a need to empower the voiceless and change the behaviour of the powerful.

To order copies of the book contact david.archer@actionaid.org or go to www.amazon.com.

The conference will now be held from 1–4 December 2009

A blessing in disguise?

Messages for the delayed CONFINTEA meeting

Every twelve years since 1949 there has been a huge UN conference on adult education called CONFINTEA… but the conference this year, due to have been held in May 2009 in Belem, Brazil, is now in doubt. Fears over a swine flu pandemic led the Brazilian government to postpone the meeting and at this moment it is not clear when the meeting will be re-scheduled. This is clearly very frustrating for activists who have been involved in preparing for CONFINTEA through regional conferences and national processes over the past year or more. However, it may turn into a blessing in disguise.

The present draft of the *Belem Framework for Action*, which will be the key outcome and was circulated in advance of the conference, is a weak document which fails to present a clear vision or concrete commitments. Civil society actors, convened by the International Council for Adult Education, have worked on a draft civil society advocacy paper that was to have been finalised at a civil society forum just before Belem. This contains a much stronger basis for action. The Africa Platform for Adult Education has also prepared a strong paper outlining the key issues that they see.

The challenge is to boil these down into an agenda that can galvanise action. The Global Campaign for Education has made an attempt to do this, reviewing the existing documents and highlighting ten key points for advocacy during CONFINTEA (see table right).

In April 2009, over ten million people were mobilised in over 100 countries as part of GCE's Global Action Week, focused around "The Big Read". This shows that there is mass support for national and international action on youth and adult literacy. Now that CONFINTEA has been postponed there is time to translate this mass support into some serious policy engagement. GCE is proposing that civil society activists in each country around the world should set up a meeting with the Ministers/officials who will be on their country delegation to CONFINTEA. The ten points (right) could provide a simple framework for stimulating a dialogue about what should be agreed in Belem, whenever the meeting takes place. There can be little value to convening 2000 people in Brazil unless the outcome has real substance! The ten points in the box are a simple starting point.

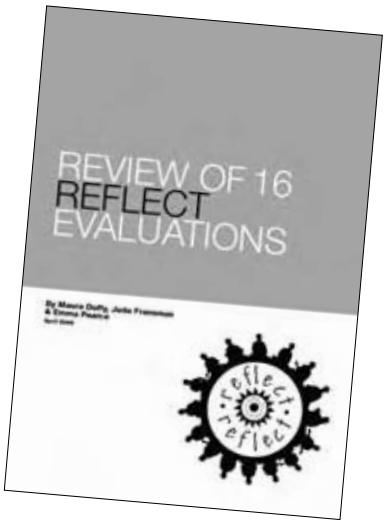
1. Youth and adult education must be recognised as **enforceable human rights** (see comment 13 on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and discrimination in provision must not be tolerated.
2. **Youth and adult education should be seen as the invisible glue,** essential for the achievement of MDGs and national development goals; requiring inter-ministerial collaboration and active participation of civil society at all levels. Participation is essential to ensure that programmes take into account the specific needs of marginalised groups, and encourage development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.
3. **Literacy must be seen as a continuum** and the old polarized dichotomy of literacy and illiteracy must be abolished. New national surveys are needed that collect data on a spectrum of literacy levels to show the real scale of the challenge and to end the myth of there being a magic line to cross from illiteracy into literacy.
4. There should be **no more short-term campaigns** to eradicate adult literacy. Rather, sustained investment is needed in programmes that work with learners for at least two or three years, with continuity into programmes of lifelong learning.
5. There is an urgent need to develop **qualified and professional adult education facilitators**, teachers, administrators and researchers – and to ensure they are properly paid.
6. The **International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy**, published by GCE (see Writing the Wrongs GCE 2005), should be used as a starting point for new national dialogue, for the design of effective programmes and as a basis for monitoring and evaluation of existing provision.
7. States should commit themselves to allocate **a minimum 6% of their GNP to education** and, within the education budget, to assign a minimum of 6% for Youth and Adult Education, with a priority given to literacy.
8. Donors should pay their fair share of the external financing requirement for Youth and Adult Education. At least **6% of aid to education from all donors should go to Youth and Adult Education** in order to fill the financing gap in this area, which is at least two billion dollars a year.
9. The EFA Fast Track Initiative, and any future global financing mechanism for education, should actively require **education sector plans** to include credible strategies and investment to address adult literacy.
10. The **International Monetary Fund macro-economic conditions that undermine investment in education should be challenged,** especially in the present context of global recession, so that States can adequately invest in the full EFA agenda. The G20 should not give the funds they have pledged to the IMF until there is real reform of the conditions that block investment in education.

For the wider civil society papers see www.campaignforeducation.org or contact lucia@campaignforeducation.org

Review of 16 *Reflect* Evaluations

by Maura Duffy, Jude Fransman & Emma Pearce

Reflect programmes operate in hugely diverse contexts and approaches to evaluation have been equally diverse – making it difficult to consolidate evidence and learning. In response to this, a new evaluation framework has just been published (see p.27). Learning from existing evaluations was key to the development of this new framework. Consequently, a review of 16 recent evaluations of *Reflect* has been conducted in order to analyse both the processes of evaluation and the main literacy outcomes observed. The review covers evaluations of programmes in 15 countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi (x2), Mali, Nepal, Pakistan, South Africa, Sudan, Vietnam and Laos and Vietnam.



Evaluation in *Reflect* up to 2008

The first evaluation efforts took place in 1996 with the evaluation of the three ***Reflect* pilot projects**. The evaluation proved that, of those adults who initially enrolled in *Reflect* Circles, 65% in El Salvador, 60% in Bangladesh and 68% in Uganda, achieved basic literacy over a one-year period. This compared to 43%, 26% and 22% in the respective control groups. Importantly, the evaluation report, published by ODA/DFID (now in its fourth re-print), highlighted significant evidence of wider impact, connecting the literacy outcomes to many others, such as: challenging and changing gender roles; improving health and hygiene; increasing school enrolment (especially of girls); strengthening productivity (e.g. diversifying crops, increasing cooperative practices) and increasing peoples involvement in and control over community development programmes.

In 2001, Abby Riddell conducted an **independent review** of 13 evaluations of *Reflect* programmes from 10 countries. The review showed clear evidence of a similar range of impacts. There is overwhelming evidence of transformation in people's personal lives – strengthening self-esteem and enabling people to engage in significant new personal and community development initiatives. A positive impact on gender relations within the family and wider power relations was reported from countries as diverse as Ghana, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, South Africa and Sudan. Recommendations included the need to better define outcomes (given that some practitioners see a conflict between literacy and empowerment objectives) and to foster a culture of evaluation. Though her findings were widely disseminated, at this point in time, ActionAid was striving to hand ownership of *Reflect* over to regional networks to ensure contextualised (and bottom-up) practice. As a result, evaluations continued to be summative (to promote *Reflect* to different governments and donors), sporadic and localised.

A number of evaluations of *Reflect* projects have been carried out in the intervening years, both at local, regional and national levels. There is still no uniting methodology for evaluation and the projects themselves vary greatly in their focus and approach. In order to feed into the process of developing a new evaluation framework a wide selection of these evaluations has been reviewed in order both to compile recent evidence linking *Reflect* to literacy and to analyse the evaluation process in order to draw conclusions regarding good practice. This report presents the key findings and recommendations that emerged from this exercise.

Review of 16 *Reflect* evaluations

The review covered evaluations of *Reflect* conducted since 2001. Some 16 evaluations were submitted for analysis representing programmes in 15 countries. The evaluations were incredibly rich and diverse and consequently quite a task to digest. In response, two templates were designed by consultant Jude Fransman to help extract and organise the data in a comprehensive and comparable way. They were then given to a small number of consultants who combed through the evaluations and filled in the relevant boxes with the relevant information. Two consultants – Maura Duffy and Jude Fransman – then had the task of analyzing and presenting the comparative data from the templates as accessibly as possible. To do this they developed coding schemes for each section and presented the data in large Excel files. The coding schemes were posted on to the *Reflect* evaluation web forum Basecamp for comments. Once both Templates had been fully coded, the next step was to identify patterns and trends between evaluations. These observations were written up as tables and comments in a document, again made available on Basecamp and forming the basis for the final review report.

The main conclusions of the review are outlined below:

Part One – Contributions of *Reflect* to literacy

Part One of the report examines the evidence that links *Reflect* to literacy. It examines how literacy is understood, analysed and developed throughout the *Reflect* process as well as links between the conceptual underpinnings of literacy, the contributions of *Reflect* to the literacy environment and to literacy development and the role of literacy in the achievement of other

development outcomes. It also looks at any tensions between literacy and the achievement of other goals.

Part One of the report concludes that:

1. First and foremost the evaluations reveal that *Reflect* programmes in general are associated with a wide range of development outcomes, including literacy development. Even though most programmes identify a wide range of goals, in practice most programmes also achieve a number of unintentional additional beneficial outcomes.
2. It is important for programmes to have a clear understanding of the literacy context and of literacy in its broader sense as a means of framing and developing a programme. The majority of programmes tend to view literacy rather narrowly as the '3Rs'. While many programmes do acknowledge the wider context of literacy, this is often in an implicit and poorly developed way. This may mean that programmes underestimate the impact of their circle activities on literacy development and/or that programmes ignore literacy development opportunities.
3. This focus on literacy as being about "basic literacy" may also mean that programmes lack a focus on sustaining literacy and the development of literacy and post-literacy habits that ensure that participants continue to develop their skills and do not fall back into illiteracy. It may also explain why most circles/participants/programmes do not appear to generate new demands for literacy outcomes and literacy resources.
4. Some programmes appear to see a dichotomy between literacy acquisition and the achievement of other development goals such as empowerment and community action. However, the evidence suggests that the two are integral parts of a process and that the development of one has a positive impact on the achievement of the other. This is not to say that literacy ensures development/empowerment: rather that the two are parallel and interweaving processes.
5. Many *Reflect* programmes seem to have a misconception about the use of supplementary reading materials in *Reflect*, leading to missed opportunities to introduce external literacy materials into *Reflect* circles. Furthermore, this may lead to a general failure to develop demands by circle participants and facilitators for additional literacy resources.
6. The majority of *Reflect* programmes are making a positive contribution to literacy development. Even programmes that focus on empowerment and do not involve any direct teaching of literacy can still have a positive impact on literacy acquisition and skills development. It is important to raise awareness of these diverse literacy outcomes so that literacy benefits beyond traditional teaching of basic literacy can be better understood and factored more consciously into the design of programmes.

Part Two – The evaluation process

Part Two of the report focuses on analysis of the evaluation process. The section concludes that while many innovations are taking place, particularly in terms of the design of evaluation tools, the evaluations are by and large unclear on issues such as conceptualisations of literacy and the literacy environment, purpose and ownership of evaluation, participation and critical reflection on the evaluation process itself. Methodology for evaluations is usually not discussed in any depth within the evaluation report; a definition of literacy is rarely supplied and when it is it is not necessarily consistent with how literacy is understood in the rest of the evaluation. There are of course exceptions throughout and constant reminders of the uniqueness of the context and objectives of each *Reflect* programme and the need for a similarly unique response to evaluation.

The following recommendations are made:

1. The evaluation report is only one small part of the process, often written by just one person, but as the only archived documentation, it can be seen to represent the whole evaluation. It is therefore important to make it clear who the author of the report is (and their relationship to the evaluation and the *Reflect* programme), who the report is for, and how the process of writing the report was conducted (i.e. were there meetings/consultations to inform drafts and if so, who participated?)
2. It is important to state clearly the assumptions of the evaluation, for example, conceptual underpinnings (definition of literacy and the literacy environment), purposes of the evaluation (summative, formative and capacity building), ownership of the evaluation (who funds and implements and whom the evaluation is for).
3. Detailed attention should be given to the evaluation methodology. The different phases and participation in each phase should be carefully considered. Power relations should be discussed and participation should relate back to the purpose and ownership of the evaluation.
4. Baseline data is imperative in order to conduct a legitimate evaluation. The initial analysis of context and the literacy environment that informs this should adopt the same understandings and principles as the evaluation.
5. Careful consideration of timing and timetabling should inform the planning of any evaluation, as should the sampling of Circles when not all can be visited.
6. Power issues should be kept in mind and discussed at different stages throughout the evaluation process. Ways of mitigating power relations should also be discussed, especially where power is a barrier to participation and to obtaining legitimate findings.

The *Reflect* Evaluation Framework is published

Kas – M. J. Cascant i Sempere, Reflect *Evaluation Framework Coordinator, SARN – South Africa* Reflect *Network*

After two years of intense efforts, the *Reflect* Evaluation Framework is now ready. Fruit of the collaboration of *Reflect* practitioners internationally, the new framework provides guidelines and a set of tools to help *Reflect* and literacy practitioners through the evaluation process, from planning to writing up and disseminating the final evaluation report.

Over fifteen years have passed since the first pilot projects for *Reflect* were carried out in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda. The approach is now used by over 500 organisations in some 75 countries. In each case, it has been adapted to meet local circumstances and there is now a huge diversity of practice. In some places, the focus is literacy and empowerment, as in the first pilot projects, but in many cases, the focus is on social change without an explicit literacy element. Just as *Reflect* has diversified, so evaluation efforts have varied and this has made it difficult to compare projects across different organisations or countries and limited the opportunities for learning. The new evaluation framework will help ensure that programme objectives and participants' learning expectations are being met whilst allowing flexibility for these to evolve over time.

Constructing the framework

Activities started in 2007, with a draft framework put together in April and piloted in South Africa. At the end of the year, workshops were held in London and Cape Town to discuss the initial draft and plan the participatory process to develop the framework document. At the same time, a review of existing *Reflect* evaluations was undertaken in order to collate learning about current evaluation processes and to make sure that we were able to build on existing good practice (see p.25).

During June and July 2008, a global on-line discussion was held on 'Evaluating *Reflect*'. Contacts were made worldwide through the international *Reflect* circle, CIRAC, and *Reflect* practitioners were invited to contribute. The discussions lasted six weeks and involved 88 practitioners from 42 countries working in four languages (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish). In line with *Reflect* principles, the on-line discussion was global and participatory. It was an opportunity for detailed reflection on the many aspects of evaluating *Reflect*. Topics covered included: evaluation, literacy, empowerment, power and the literacy environment, indicators, advocacy and communication. Each country or organisation shared learning on aspects of evaluation that were of particular importance to their context.

The on-line discussion served to:

a) collect existing tools for the future evaluation framework,
b) be a web platform that allowed practitioners to share tools with other countries with similar evaluation needs; and
c) create new tools for those evaluation topics which were found to need strengthening.

a) Numerous **tools were gathered** during the discussion and have been integrated in the final framework. Amongst them: the 'motivation tree' and the 'dissemination of evaluation results map' from Angola, the 'I joined *Reflect* because…' tool from the DRC; the 'literacy dice game' from Lesotho, the 'seeds analysis' from Sierra Leone and the 'how much did I talk' tool from the UK. Tools developed in the evaluation pilot in South Africa and the Cape Town workshop in 2007 were also included, including 'the language matrix', the 'literacy role plays' and the 'literacy environment map'.
b) An example of the **growing sharing** of tools throughout the process is the 'census of circles' tool, which was sent to the on-line discussion during Topic 1 ('What is evaluating') by DVV Madagascar and which Pamoja Guinea Bissau later adopted as one of the main tools for its *Reflect* evaluation in December 2008. In its *Reflect* evaluation in February 2009, CIAZO in El Salvador made use of the tools: the 'seeds analysis' (from Sierra Leone) and the 'I joined *Reflect* because…' (from the DRC).
c) The *Review of 16 Reflect evaluations* carried out by ActionAid in 2008 (see p. 25) revealed a number of evaluation gaps and encouraged **the creation of new tools** to cover them, such as: 'Orientation cards for an evaluation report' and 'Planning the phases of your evaluation' amongst others. Recent *Reflect* evaluations and workshops also served to develop new tools to strengthen the weakest evaluation areas.

Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the DRC, Guinea Bissau, El Salvador, Madagascar, Mali, Peru, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo and Vietnam stood out for sending numerous documents to the discussion, which served as a base for the creation of new tools. This sharing on such a scale across so many countries would have been impossible without the tireless and invaluable help of our translation team, Aurélie Voix (South Africa), Emma Pearce (UK), Lylian Mendoza (Peru) and Sue Upton (Mali).

Supporting new evaluations

Following the online discussion, a numer of *Reflect* evaluations took place in late 2008 and early 2009 to

Evaluating in partnership with the government
"*The evaluation was carried out by PAMOJA Guinea Bissau and the D.G.A.E.N.F (Department of Literacy and Non Formal Education from the Ministry of Education). The D.G.A.E.N.F has supported Pamoja with didactic materials and technically, with experienced animators from the ministry. [These have given] orientation to Pamoja [*Reflect*] facilitators. The literacy centres from D.G.A.E.N.F did not practice [*Reflect*] but now with this exchange they have initiated* Reflect *in their centres with a project of health and community participation.*"
Reflect **Evaluation Report, Pamoja, Guinea Bissau.**
For more information, contact pamojagb@gmail.com

Evaluating with video
"*ALPHADEV collected testimonies through a video documentary. The reporter met learning groups, female leaders, neighbourhood delegates, a political representative, facilitators and animators. The meetings considered the following questions: what do you think of the programme and what improvements are needed? The film was presented at the national workshop for the validation of the evaluation report.*"
Reflect **Evaluation Report, ALPHADEV, Senegal.**
For copies of the evaluation documentary (local languages with subtitles in French), contact info@ongalphadev.org

Evaluating with the local radio
The Sierra Leonean organisation CARD, in partnership with Live KISS FM 104, used the radio for coverage of the evaluation exercise (participants' literacy and numeracy) in two of the communities: "*This allowed the chiefdom elders, including the chiefdom speaker who listened to the live programme, to get an idea of the participants' performance*".
Reflect **Evaluation Report, CARD, Sierra Leone.**
For more information, contact cardsalone@yahoo.com

consolidate the global effort of evaluating *Reflect* and literacy. These new evaluations were led by ActionAid/DVV in Angola; Pamoja in Guinea Bissau; AJP in Guinea Conakry; CIAZO in El Salvador; Pamoja/DVV in Madagascar; Alphadev in Senegal, CARD in Sierra Leone and LLU+, London South Bank University in the UK. Some great practices have materialised. In addition, many national workshops on evaluating *Reflect* took place.

The evaluation framework document: what will you find?
The evaluation framework offers 16 chapters of practical participatory tools that will guide you through a systematic and participatory process of evaluating literacy and your *Reflect* programme. The document also includes information on what '*Reflect*'; 'literacy'; 'literacy for empowerment' and 'evaluation' are all about as well as some practical guidelines to prepare for an evaluation.

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Sharing experiences of evaluation

Next steps: publishing and sharing at CONFINTEA VI
The new evaluation framework is now available in English, French and Spanish. This is an exciting moment, which has germinated as part of an international effort over the past two years. However, we do not intend to stop here and still wish to hear from all those of you who have not yet contributed.

To order a copy of the new Evaluation Framework contact: emma.pearce@actionaid.org

UNESCO prizes for *Reflect*

Organisations working with *Reflect* won UNESCO literacy prizes in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008.

2003 – the International *Reflect* Circle (CIRAC) was awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize. CIRAC was praised for supporting adaptable and flexible programmes and helping practitioners exchange experiences, teaching and written materials in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

2005 – GOAL Sudan was awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its Women's Literacy Programme in Displaced Communities using the *Reflect* approach, combining literacy with empowerment.

2007 – Family Re-orientation Education and Empowerment (FREE) in Nigeria was awarded the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for creating a network of learning centres. FREE provides literacy skills and community development programmes particularly targeting women and girls.

2008 – The People's Action Forum *Reflect* and HIV and AIDS programme was awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its innovative strategies and strong community ownership. The UNESCO jury admired the association's use of local languages in teaching the rural women in their literacy programmes to be autonomous, following the motto: "*rather than wait for government to decide, people should be involved in the decision-making process*".

Language choice in implementing *Reflect* in conflict and post-conflict environments: lessons from Sudan

by Rob Kevilhan

In 1998, GOAL established a participatory adult literacy programme targeting displaced women in Khartoum, Sudan, based on the *Reflect* approach. Since then, the programme has expanded to include literacy activities in a number of distinct areas throughout the country. In the wake of political changes within Sudan from 2005 onwards, the question of language of instruction became increasingly salient to the programme. This article reviews GOAL's experience on the question of language choice in *Reflect* with particular emphasis on Malakal in southern Sudan.

Language choice in a situation of conflict

Established in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan, while war still raged in southern Sudan, GOAL's *Reflect* adult literacy programme was initially implemented through the medium of Arabic. In many respects the decision to begin literacy activities in Arabic was not a matter of choice – official Khartoum government policy was (and to a large extent still is) focused on encouraging and promoting the use of Arabic, seen as a means of ensuring national coherence and unity. In addition, GOAL's *Reflect* programme was designed as a sustainable developmental intervention and close co-operation with local adult educational authorities was therefore essential.

Government policy was not the only reason for this approach. Pragmatic considerations also played a role – Arabic is the lingua franca of northern Sudan and is essential for life in Khartoum in particular. Displaced women, living in difficult desert like conditions on the margins of the city would, it was felt, benefit from literacy, numeracy and improved spoken skills in the dominant language of the region in which they found themselves living. The availability of teaching and instructional materials in Arabic that could be easily adapted to the needs of an urban-based programme was also a factor. The decision to choose Arabic was also eased by the nature of the programme itself. It was felt that the empowerment aspect of the programme was as important as the literacy (regardless of language), and that the medium used to encourage self-empowerment was less important than the process.

Organisations working with the *Reflect* approach won UNESCO literacy prizes in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008 **see page 28.**

From 2003 onwards, GOAL began to expand its adult literacy activities outside Khartoum to Darfur (2003-2004), and in 2005 to Kassala (in eastern Sudan), Malakal (in Southern Sudan) and Abyei (a transitional area between northern and southern Sudan). At the time of the expansion into these areas all were controlled by the northern Khartoum government and the war in southern Sudan was on-going. The programme was modified through the production of a new *Reflect* manual to address the different socio-economic conditions in southern Sudan. However, the language of instruction for the new curriculum remained Arabic, initially without too much consideration of possible social and political consequences. It was not until late 2005 in the wake of the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in southern Sudan, that an opportunity arose to consider the continued appropriateness of using Arabic in all programme locations.

Review of language choice in Malakal

With the signature of the CPA, governance arrangements within Southern Sudan began to change. The peace agreement established a devolved government for the southern region with significant autonomy with respect to educational policies. One of the earliest decisions of the new Government of Southern Sudan was to re-establish English as the language of government and education in the south. It is within this context, and because of conflicting signals from programme participants in Malakal and surrounding areas, that I conducted a review with participants of language choices in Malakal in October 2005. The question posed to the participants was in what language they wished to acquire literacy and numeracy skills and why.

Group discussions were held with literacy circles in ten locations – six in Malakal town and four in smaller settlements located to the south on or near the Sobat River. All were in locations that were controlled by the northern Sudanese government for most of the war. At the time of the discussions, SPLA forces had been present in Malakal town for approximately 3-4 months and were

Reflect website relaunch

The *Reflect* website has been relaunched. Go to www.reflect-action.org to take a look at the new site and join the practitioners' forum.

barracked there along with northern government forces, while the civil administration was in the process of adapting to the new political circumstances. Settlements visited in rural areas continued to be occupied by northern government forces and security officials, though the general atmosphere was somewhat relaxed. The approximate number of participants in these groups totalled over 140, with the vast majority comprising relatively poor women. Discussions were held in the language of the group. In the case of Arabic speaking groups (in addition to those few people who spoke limited English) it was possible for me to have some direct communication with participants in Sudanese colloquial Arabic. In five of the groups visited, participants responded in local languages only, with translation provided by locally based programme staff.

Main findings

The challenges of implementing a large literacy programme in an ethnically diverse region are illustrated by the results of the focus group discussions. Five different ethnic groups with different languages were represented in the literacy circles, with seven different languages (five mother tongues plus English and Arabic) comprising the total possible number of languages that could have been used by participants. Significantly, given the fact that the circles were organised on the basis of Arabic speaking classes when these discussions took place, only two groups responded primarily in Arabic, and in both cases these groups were ethnically mixed and town based.

The table below summarizes this trend.

	Location	Date	Approx. No.	Ethnicity of participants	Language participants used	Language requested
1	Town	13/10/05	20	Chollo	Dhok Chollo	English
2	Town	13/10/05	20	Murle, Anuak & Nuer	Arabic, English	English & Arabic (1 participant)
3	Town	14/10/05	8	Chollo	Dhok Chollo & Arabic	English & Arabic
4	Rural	16/10/05	15	Dinka, Nuer & Chollo	Dhok Chollo	English & Arabic
5	Rural	17/10/05	16	Chollo	Dhok Chollo	English
6	Rural	17/10/05	20	Nuer	Nuer	English
7	Rural	17/10/05	8	Nuer	Nuer	English, Arabic & Nuer
8	Town	18/10/05	20	Chollo & Nuer	Arabic, English (2 participants)	English & Arabic
9	Town	19/10/05	8	Chollo	Arabic & Dhok Chollo	English & Arabic
10	Town	19/10/05	6	Chollo	Arabic & Dhok Chollo	English
	Total		**141**			

In response to the question posed – i.e. choice of language of instruction, results varied. Of ten circles visited, four expressed a strong desire for English language only instruction, five stated that they would prefer English and Arabic, with English typically first in their order of priorities and one group expressed a desire for their local language (Nuer) as well as English and Arabic. No group expressed a desire for Arabic alone – in other words for the way in which the programme was currently configured in terms of language.

While stated preferences for English only were split evenly between town and rural areas, four of the five groups indicating a desire for both English and Arabic were town based. This may reflect the ethnic heterogeneity of the town itself, and the continued use of Arabic as a lingua franca there. However, Chollo, who comprise a majority in Malakal town, seem to favour English. This may reflect the importance of Dhok-Chollo (the language of the Chollo) in Malakal as an alternative lingua franca to Arabic. People in Malakal indicated that Arabic and Dhok-Chollo were the two most commonly heard languages around town and in the market, for example. Of those groups who requested both English and Arabic, three were ethnically mixed, while the other two were majority Chollo.

When asked why they expressed a desire for English, reasons included animosity towards the northern government and Arabic as the language of the north because of suffering endured during the war; wanting to be able to read doctors prescriptions (apparently Ministry of Health doctors often write prescriptions in English; access to

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Practising writing

government jobs; and ability to be able to deal directly with *khawagaat* (foreigners) and *manuzamaat* (literally 'organisations', though in practice it refers to NGOs). In some cases, groups indicated that they already spoke Arabic, and because of the Arabic literacy classes received to date could now write their name and read basic signs etc. They felt this was sufficient and now wanted to progress to English.

What about local languages?
While local languages featured lower on people's expressed learning preferences, they were central to the discussion process itself. Only two groups did not answer in whole or in part using local languages. Circle participant's responses to (extremely modest) efforts on my part to greet them in their own languages were always positively received.

When asked about literacy in local languages, many in Malakal town mentioned that they could already learn their local language at churches during the weekends. For Christians, local languages remain important as a scriptural language. Obviously written Arabic is also of great importance to Muslims. One group in Malakal town comprised Chollo who were both Christian and Muslim. The Muslims in this group expressed a desire for Arabic as well as English, while the Christians argued for English only. Because local missionary churches conduct services in local languages it does not appear that religious use played a strong role in expressed preferences for English, though missionary organisations are also important providers of services in southern Sudan and as such the desire to communicate directly with foreigners may capture material considerations in dealing with newly arrived foreign missionaries as well as secular foreign aid workers.

The longer term cultural consequences of their attitudes, particularly the prioritization of English and to a lesser extent, Arabic, over their mother tongues, are not conclusive. Alternative means of accessing literacy classes in these languages may be weighing in their decision to de-emphasise local languages in their discussions with me. In discussions, many women were very insistent on their desire to learn English. However, expressing a desire to learn a new language and actually learning that language are two different things. It would appear that at present, respondents also see English primarily as a suitable additional language to learn; in other words that they do not envisage it displacing their own languages in daily use. English, in many respects, represents a 'gateway' language that offers possible future advancement, rather than an alternative language that would involve large-scale language shift.

English, in many respects, represents a 'gateway' language that offers possible future advancement, rather than an alternative language that would involve large-scale language shift.

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Mapping areas

Programme response
The results of these discussions with programme participants were considered and options reviewed by the programme management team in Khartoum. The current structure of the *Reflect* literacy programme is that participants should engage in classes for two years. At the time of these discussions, all women engaged in the programme were in their first year. For these women it was decided that the second year curriculum should be changed to include an introductory module on English with a particular emphasis on the English alphabet. For new enrolments, it was decided that the programme would respond to the expressed needs of local women and move away from Arabic and towards English. Low levels of English language ability represent something of a challenge in this respect – however, for many women in the region the same challenges applied with respect to Arabic language acquisition. Discussions revealed that in practice many group facilitators were actually conducting sessions in local languages and introducing Arabic as they went along. GOAL decided to adapt this approach to English language acquisition, facilitated to some extent, by the fact that local languages in the Malakal are written using the Latin alphabet. As a first step, the *Reflect* manual used by facilitators was translated into both English and Chollo in late 2005/2006. While further work is still required in this location – particularly with respect to Nuer language resources – it nonetheless represents a first step in responding to participant needs.

In 2008, the programme in Malakal had ten circles; of these, two were run in English, one in Chollo and seven in Arabic. The English language unit continues to be used in the Arabic language circles, with English words common in local Arabic used as the starting point for introducing the English alphabet. In practice, facilitators in all circles throughout southern Sudan facilitate activities in local languages, while introducing words in either English or Arabic, depending on the language the circle is learning. Interestingly, despite the survey results relegating local languages, subsequent assessments established that there was sufficient demand to establish one Chollo language circle. Reasons given by participants for beginning literacy activities in Chollo included participants wanting to be able to read the Bible in their own language, their desire to pass on Chollo literacy skills to their

children and as a tool towards learning to read English (as much of the alphabet and many of the sounds are the same). This circle, which is now in its second year, are now learning Chollo and English literacy skills in parallel, having focused on Chollo-only literacy in their first year.

Conclusions

GOAL's experience with respect to language in Sudan illustrates the challenges in implementing adult literacy programmes in ethnically diverse situations, particularly in conflict prone environments where language use can become politicized. As a relatively small agency whose focus is on helping the poorest of the poor, GOAL has little choice in some situations but to conform to the rules and regulations of the operational environments in which it works. However, when circumstances change, as with the CPA in southern Sudan, it is important that agencies engaged in literacy activities are sensitive to new priorities which programme participants may have with respect to language and literacy acquisition and provide mechanisms for considering any necessary changes. True development – defined as giving people greater capacities and abilities to make choices for themselves – demands as much. Such changes can be costly, and take time. Nonetheless, for agencies committed to development principles that emphasize genuine choice, such changes are necessary.

With thanks to Angela Bessarione, Leila Bashir, Phoebe Nyarad, Joyi Ezibon, Tessa Morod and all of GOAL's *Reflect* staff as well as to all the participants of *Reflect* circles.

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New *Reflect* Research and Training Centre in Bangladesh

by Zakir Hossain

The Society for Participatory Education and Development (SPED), a Bangladeshi network for organisations working with participatory education approaches, has just set up a new *Reflect* Research and Training Centre (RRTC) in Dhaka, with the support of the *Reflect* Practitioners Forum of Bangladesh (RPFB) and 80 *Lokokendras* (poor people's organisations).

The centre, which opened in November 2008, has a fully equipped training room for 40, as well as accommodation for 35 people. The dream of those who set it up is to conduct research around issues related to participatory education and to promote poor people's organisations, especially Lokokendras. The RRTC also helps SPED to sustain and strengthen national *Reflect* network activities.

The main activities of the RRTC include:

- Conducting research on *Reflect* and other participatory approaches.
- Organising seminars, workshops, conventions and conferences to share research findings.
- Identifying potential participatory approaches for development work.
- Establishing a resource centre.
- Producing publications and video documentation.
- Organising training and sharing meetings for members and others.
- Providing venue facilities on demand.
- Organising an annual general meeting.

The day-to-day management of the centre is by the Programme Coordinator of SPED with support from the *Reflect* Development Unit, IASL of ActionAid Bangladesh. There will also be an RRTC Management Committee with representatives from SPED, RPFB and the Lokokendras. The RRTC belongs to *Reflect* practitioners and implementing organisations that include Lokokendra members and managers, *Reflect* facilitators, trainers, RPFB and SPED.

Since opening, RRTC has hosted training courses on leadership development and Lokokendra management, workshops on monitoring and evaluation, and meetings for disability activists and Stop Violence Against Women networks, amongst others. RRTC also facilitated a study on adult literacy in Bangladesh, as part of Asia *Reflect* Day 2009.

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The new centre will be a focal point for Reflect training

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The new Reflect Centre in Dhaka

For more details, contact the SPED Programme Coordinator: sped_reflect@yahoo.com

From theory to practice – How *Reflect* came to ESOL

by Tish Taylor, Reflect *ESOL Coordinator, ActionAid*

The *Reflect* ESOL project began partly as a result of enquiries from teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the UK wanting to know what this unique approach to adult learning was, and how they could use it in their ESOL class. With a small budget and a small band of volunteer ESOL teachers, the *Reflect* ESOL pilot project set out to experiment with and trial the *Reflect* tools, process and philosophy for one academic year in discrete, vocational and community classes from Entry 1 to Level 1 (beginners to upper intermediate). From the outset the project aimed to contextualise the approach into something we could practically use in the classroom and share with the ESOL community.

Understanding and adapting *Reflect* for ESOL

Central to *Reflect* are the educational and philosophical ideas of Paulo Freire, in particular, his criticism of what he termed education banking; where the student is seen as an empty account to be filled-up by the teacher. For some this questioned our use of course books where, as Freire criticised, 'it is the teacher who chooses the words and proposes them to the learners' (Freire 1972). *Reflect* encourages the examination of power relationships between teacher and learner, aiming to place the learner at the centre of their own leaning process. In terms of language and literacy, *Reflect* identifies with a critical approach to learning. Here spoken or written discourse can become a medium to explore and analyse critical social issues, and an impetus to take action to improve one's condition in life.

To practically implement *Reflect* in our ESOL classes meant exploring and re-evaluating our roles, aims and visions for the class. For many of the teachers, however, it was a validation of their current practice. Through an ongoing teacher- and student-led action research project teachers shared and or adopted techniques to meet their aims. These included stepping back more (or completely), 'going with the flow', being explicit with the learners about *Reflect* and the teaching and learning process, opening up and sharing something of themselves and listening out for what interested or concerned their students in their lives, and sometimes facing and negotiating problems together.

In particular, the pilot teachers aimed to create spaces for learners to speak about what was important to them, and by using the tools, situate their stories, feelings and experiences in relation to wider gender, economic, social and political issues. Finally, and if appropriate, the participants would discuss courses of action to address any concerns arising.

The tools

To support this process, *Reflect* employs a variety of participatory learning tools and techniques. The ones used most frequently in the project were the visualisation or graphic tools such as trees, rivers, icebergs (a new tool invented by one of the groups), body maps, matrices, etc. The tools provide a way of systematically recording the points of a discussion and the language created (in whatever form) for deeper analysis (see examples below).

Some teachers in the project found particular tools facilitated particular types of spoken and written discourse. The river enabled narrative and the tree enabled discussion, argument and sometimes anecdote. However, tutors and learners demonstrated repeatedly that tools could be adapted or created to fit the theme or topic of discussion. In fact, the ability to adapt or create tools from scratch became essential to successfully facilitate discussion around learner topics of interest.

Analysing learner concerns

The pilot tutors faced different issues throughout the trial period and beyond. However, the action research project demonstrated that teachers were committed to analysing and experimenting with possible solutions. The case studies below give examples of *Reflect* ESOL work and how teachers and learners worked through aspects of practice. One issue was how to address student concerns beyond the level of experience, analysing issues and possibly moving on to action. In the first example, the class analyse a problem one of their classmates was facing:

Case Study One –
'Bad treatment by the doctor's receptionist'

An iceberg tool was used with a health and social care embedded ESOL class. Working in small groups, learners selected a challenge that one of the group was experiencing in their life. This challenge was shown as the visible top of an iceberg. Learners then discussed what was 'under' this visible top, by probing the challenge and posing questions. They also considered follow up actions.

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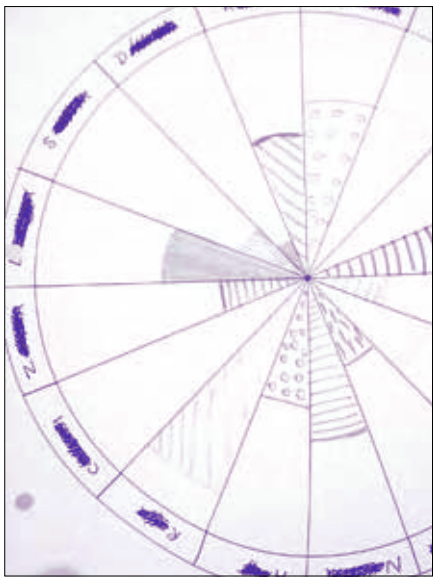
This teacher reported that she had taught this course before (without *Reflect*) and whereas previously, discussion had often stayed at the level of 'experience', she had noticed that the *Reflect* approach seemed to take the discussion to a deeper more analytical level.

From notes of an observed lesson quoted *from Moon and Sunderland 2008.*



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Evaluation wheel

Building a class community

In another class, the teacher noted unequal contribution in discussions and possible concerns around class dynamics. Together the class, including the teacher, agreed to explore why this should be. Using the wheel tool or pie-chart, learners and teacher indicated how good they felt about their contribution and how much they had listened by 'filling in' the appropriate amount of their segment or slice of pie (see diagram).

> *"I knew there was a need for sensitivity from me and the class… and repeating the exercise over a few sessions [weeks], I did see a change in class dynamics. The tool gave us an opportunity of seeing who felt good about their speaking and opened up a space for a real exchange of opinions, questions and concerns about speaking. After, I observed some more dominant class members include and 'bring in' quieter learners and they were given space to communicate. I really feel we have a better feeling of a class community."*
>
> (Taken from a teacher's reflective diary)

Reflect and language work

There was evidence of teachers and learners working together to develop class language materials and self-made workbooks at word and sentence level. However, teachers noted the strong links between the *Reflect* approach and language work at discourse level. One teacher stated how language flowed naturally from her *Reflect* ESOL sessions. She states "*the whole way is very holistic…it lends itself to holistic language work at all levels and because of this, it lends itself to discourse work*".

(quoted from *Moon and Sunderland* 2008)

A positive evaluation

A milestone in the project was the publication of the external evaluation conducted by LLU+, South Bank University. Written by Pauline Moon and Helen Sunderland, this independent evaluation centred its findings on a series of evaluation questions. The first, "In what ways can *Reflect* support learners' English language development?", linked its findings with concepts outlined in other recent research, such as 'speaking from within', 'interactional spaces' and 'turning talk into learning' (*Cook and Roberts*, 2007).

> *"The way* Reflect *ESOL can provide opportunities for authentic and extended talk is very significant because recent research has emphasised the importance of this type of talk for language learning."*
>
> Moon and Sunderland, 2008

The LLU+ evaluation of the *Reflect* ESOL project recommended the approach to ESOL teachers suggesting, "*The messages…for ESOL are important and should be disseminated widely*". The fact that their *Reflect* practice felt intrinsically right and effective and was supported by current ESOL research gave an enormous boost to the project.

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Constructing a river diagram

Conclusions

Pilot teacher reports showed cautious reactions from learners in the initial stages of the project. However, by the end, learners spoke about the benefits they experienced, not just in terms of language learning but also of the knowledge and confidence they gained through opportunities to speak freely about their lives:

Some comments from learners

"…more confident now."

"I think now it is easy how you going to find job because you can speak to the person I'm not scared anymore…"

"…got a lot of confidence…our classmates help us…give me a lot of ideas."

"I think it is good to have a group discussion because you learning from other person and you learn it as well and it make you more and you speak more English."

Moon and Sunderland 2008

Regardless of previous experience or qualifications in ESOL, the pilot teachers reported positive changes in their classes and in themselves as teachers. In the words of one:

> *"I now feel that my classes are more holistic and free flowing and that they contain more possibilities for genuine human interactions of the sort that students will be more likely to come across outside the ESOL classroom, and therefore skills learned are more directly*

transferable. I do not feel that I have a Reflect *way and non-*Reflect *way of teaching. I feel that using* Reflect *has fundamentally changed and added to my teaching style and ethos. It is not a technique or tool but a committed approach that I feel works for me. I feel that using* Reflect *has allowed me to be more in tune with my students' needs and has allowed me to widen the skills learned in my classes."*

What next?

The initial pilot project is now at its end and ActionAid are currently offering dissemination and taster events on request. To date they have run two workshop courses in London and Bristol and will hold one more in London in July 2009 term. Hubs have been set up in these locations, where teachers can come along and learn about the approach and share good practice in regular meet ups. *Reflect* workshops are also on the bill at the NATECLA (UK National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults) conference in July.

Long term who can say, but I believe the *Reflect* approach will develop in ESOL through the imaginative and creative practice of teachers and learners. Already I hear exciting plans from teachers who wish to develop their ESOL teaching through topics that affect us all, from the economic downturn and sharing strategies to get by to global warming and effective action. I watch with interest to see where *Reflect* takes off next.

The *Reflect* ESOL pilot project was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

For further information, please contact the *Reflect* ESOL team on reflectesol@actionaid.org or check out the website www.reflect–action.org

2008/9 Review of ActionAid's Education Work

With over 36 years of experience in education work, ActionAid has always emphasised a critical approach to its own practice, stressing a willingness to reflect and learn in order to adapt and improve its work. In October 2008, in keeping with this tradition and with the end of the current strategy period in sight, ActionAid began a new critical examination of its education work. The 2008/9 *Review of ActionAid's Education Work* is broader and more thorough than any review attempted within the thematic area before. It has been designed to draw together learning from the current strategy period - taking stock of how effective, relevant and useful the 2005-2010 strategy has been. The review will explore the impact and quality of the organisation's education work at the local, national, and international levels. It has been designed to ask critical and challenging questions, with the intention of encouraging all those associated with ActionAid to reflect on and analyse their work in the education theme, in order to provide a solid foundation on which to build and strengthen the future direction of ActionAid's education strategy.

What are the objectives of the review?

This review has a number of objectives:

- *To evaluate the impact of the International Education Strategy (IES) on education work in ActionAid*: To understand how the IES has been useful and/or what problems it has created; what impact the strategy has had on work at the local, national and international level; how education staff have aligned their work with and interpreted the IES; and to evaluate the ongoing relevance of the strategy and how ActionAid staff see their work going forward.
- To *explore the impact and quality of ActionAid's education work at local, national and international levels*: The IES set out clear objectives for ActionAid's work and the review aims to evaluate how ActionAid has been able to meet these objectives, as well as capture stories and detailed accounts of key elements of the work. This involves exploring the diverse understandings of the rights-based approach in education work and how these guide ActionAid's work in practice. The review looks into how ActionAid's various initiatives have contributed to making a real difference to people's lives, taking into account what the potential blocks have been and where ActionAid has struggled or had a negative impact. There is also a focus on ActionAid's external reputation and relationships, gathering different perspectives to understand how its allies and targets view ActionAid's contribution to work on education.
- *To gather learning on how ActionAid has been working in education*: The way that ActionAid organises its education work and the roles that it plays are crucial to the organisation's impact. The review will attempt to understand more about the role and effectiveness of the international team, the role of the national level leads, and other staff support offered to education. This involves looking internally at ActionAid's structure and relationships, as well as externally, at how ActionAid interacts with diverse actors in the field of education; who ActionAid's partners are and what their relationships are like. It also includes looking at the relationship between education and the wider organisation, and how these relationships facilitate or hinder ActionAid's work on education.
- *To review and deepen ActionAid's accountability*: The Accountability, Learning, and Planning System (ALPS) articulates ActionAid's commitment to learning, and identifies poor and excluded people, especially women and girls, as the key accountability groups. By using critical, participatory, and innovative evaluation approaches, the review itself is devised to deepen ActionAid's accountability to its

diverse stakeholders. This includes an exploration of how power relations - both within our global education community and for ActionAid's diverse stakeholders - have shifted and changed over the past four years. The review is part of an ongoing process, to ensure that ActionAid's work is continually well grounded in poor people's reality.

- *To evaluate how effectively financial resources have been secured and used to achieve the strategic objectives of ActionAid's education work*: The review process assesses and analyses the costs incurred on strategic and operational objectives in international education work vis-à-vis performance and impact. This includes an analysis of the external funding raised along with reflections on lessons learnt about how to maximise the effectiveness of such funding.

What is the approach of the review?

The review's scope is unprecedented, presenting a valuable opportunity to holistically reflect on ActionAid's education work. Taken as such, the review team has invested considerable time and resources in researching, drawing-up and using the extensive materials and tools required to assist with the review process. It is intended as a formative review which aims to illuminate and explain ActionAid education work as it begins the process of reviewing its international strategy (2005-2010). The specific objectives of the review include:

- In-depth literature reviews focusing on the role of NGOs in meeting the EFA goals.
- Three critical stories of change, which have been commissioned to explore particularly interesting aspects of ActionAid's work in Education across regions, with stories from Brazil, Sierra Leone and Nepal.
- In-depth country case studies from Nigeria, Bangladesh, Malawi and Ghana, which have been identified to reflect the diversity among the different ActionAid education country programmes.
- Internal staff interviews to explore the ways in which education is organised and supported within ActionAid. Here, as with other areas of the review, the staff interviews will explore the links between national and international work along with the power relations between the different education actors in ActionAid.
- As a counterbalance to the internal interviews, a series of interviews with key individuals from external organisations have been designed to gauge the external perceptions and experiences of ActionAid.

Further to these materials, four comprehensive questionnaires have been devised to assist the review process. These include questionnaires for Education staff in-country, questionnaires for ActionAid national education partners and actors, and questionnaires for ActionAid's local education partners. The focus of these questionnaires is to understand better how ActionAid works in education, how it is perceived by partners, what impact it work has, and to what extent and how a RBA is operationalised in its policy and programming.

Where we are in the review and what are some of the key issues?

To date much progress has been made in collecting the data. This includes interviews with ActionAid staff that are not in the education sector and completed questionnaires. Country reviews have also begun including Nigeria and Malawi. Ultimately, how much we are able to say about ActionAid 's education work will be dependent on what information we obtain. However, we hope that the review will go a long way in stimulating debate and dialogue and in strengthening the accountability and impact of ActionAid 's education work.

Significant time and effort has already been invested by ActionAid staff in the process of review. We are indeed grateful for all the support we have received thus far and look forward to working with you closely in the coming months.

Review Team: Yusuf Sayed and Kate Newman (Consultants) Charlie Gordon, Toby Marks, Ruth Tate, Joanna Wettern (interns)

Bangladesh – No more learning on empty stomachs

By Farah Kabir, Country Director, ActionAid Bangladesh

The constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the right to education. But can children really be said to realising that right if they turn up at school with an empty stomach and get no food during the day? Children cannot concentrate when they are hungry. On paper, the government says that all children should be fed in school but in practice this usually means receiving just a biscuit, not a hot meal. One excuse that is often made is that hot meals would be too expensive. ActionAid Bangladesh questions this – and as it works intensively on issues of both education and hunger, it played a lead role in developing a Charter of Free School Meals. This Charter has since been taken up across ActionAid as a key reference point for work on school meals.

The charter has many grand words – but can they be translated into practice? ActionAid Bangladesh decided to take up the challenge, identifying schools in Dewangonj, Jamalpur where it works with a local partner the Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE).

The first step was to convene students, schools teachers, management committees, district government representatives and education officers – as well as local journalists. At first everyone said it would be impossible to deliver a hot meal in line with the charter above, within the allocated government budget of 15 taka (US$0.22) per student. It seemed almost impossible once various officials emphasised that if there was even once incidence of a child getting sick the programme would have to close.

However, BACE and ActionAid are well on the way to proving the critics wrong. Hot school meals, giving children a balanced

nutritious diet, are now being provided. Health and hygiene conditions have been maintained to excellent standards by local parents. All the food is sourced locally and this is already having a positive knock on effect on local livelihoods (digging fish pods, cultivating fish, growing vegetables and cereals, poultry farming etc). A weekly menu has been drawn up and the budgets of the whole programme are being displayed with full transparency, setting a good example for other spheres of school life. Most importantly, the local community feel connected to the schools in new ways, breaking down the gulf that too often exists between parents and teachers.

Charter on Free School Meals

1. School meals must be free for all children– they are a right and not charity – and they are the responsibility of government.
2. Meals must be nationally or locally sourced/procured with a view to strengthen local livelihood and the local economy – not based on dumping of food aid or procurement from large contractors.
3. Budgets should be managed by school management committees and their capacity must be built to manage these transparently.
4. The teachers must not be made into cooks or shoppers and nor should children.
5. The programme must guarantee a proper, nutritious hot meal – culturally adapted to local standards – not biscuits!
6. Budgets must be additional to any existing education spending – must cover admin and management cost of delivery of FSM and should be closely tracked.
7. Pre-school children (0-6) should be covered by the free school meal programme in age appropriate ways – good nutrition is essential to prevent problems in early child development.
8. Gender stereotypes should be challenged in all aspects of free school meals.
9. Discrimination should be challenged – all children should eat together.
10. The programme must be independently monitored to avoid out of date food/corruption in sourcing/problems such as children not being fed at home, etc.

Tom Pietrasik/ActionAid

Kurigram Dist. Jorina Begum, age 12, with her sister Shahina and friend Mukta in their home village of Char Harikesh, Bangladesh.

Sierra Leone: education for all, but at what price?

by Hannah Beardon

On paper it might seem that Sierra Leone is an education success story. A combination of factors has brought about a steep increase in school enrolment of boys and girls, especially at primary school. On the one hand, the government has passed laws making primary school compulsory and abolishing school fees in state schools. On the other, people have become acutely aware of the value of education, due in part to the awareness raising activities of local NGOs, but most notably because of their experience during the war, when they saw how educated people were able to get out of the conflict and support the families they left behind. And yet, paradoxically, despite this new opportunity for children to go to school, on a recent visit to Sierra Leone it was very obvious that the opportunities for poor children to receive a meaningful education were in stark decline. Children are attending school, but overcrowding and under-resourcing, combined with a lack of qualified teachers, makes it nearly impossible to follow or complete the curriculum.

Some of the reasons behind the severe underinvestment in education in Sierra Leone are very clear, and understandable. The civil war, which ended only seven years ago in 2002, not only destroyed much of the infrastructure and kept a generation of children out of school, but also had a devastating impact on the teaching profession, with a great number of qualified and experienced teachers leaving the country and many more killed. As a country emerging from a civil war, the government have to deal with reconstruction and rehabilitation, but with a severely diminished tax base, human resource capacity and private sector to support the efforts. This itself created a heavy dependence on foreign investment, grants and loans to pay for rebuilding infrastructure and public services.

This dependence on donors has elevated the International Monetary Fund to a very important position in the country's governance structure, given its role to vet and approve countries for bilateral and multilateral donors, such as DFID or the World Bank. And yet despite this strong influence in the policy decisions of the sovereign government of Sierra Leone, public awareness of the role of the IMF, and their accountability to and relationship with national civil society, have been practically non-existent.

Given this context, ActionAid Sierra Leone was eager to get involved in an international research and advocacy project, coordinated by the ActionAid International Education Team, looking at the influence of the IMF in education spending, and in particular teacher recruitment, in poor countries. The issue at the heart of the project was the limits imposed by the IMF in some countries on public sector wage bills, and how they translate into caps on the numbers of qualified teachers.

> "*All the problems we are having are created by the IMF. They introduced mass retrenchments in the civil service which compromised the quality of performance, and the ceiling they impose on recruitment of teachers has resulted in a serious deterioration in education quality.*"
>
> Ministry of Education EFA Coordinator

In Sierra Leone, the project aimed to develop the capacity of national civil society to engage in macroeconomic policy debates, and therefore offered both macro-economic literacy training (looking at the dynamics and tools used by government and central banks to control the economy, such as inflation and interest rates) and research into the impact of the public sector wage bill ceilings on teacher recruitment, and subsequently the quality and availability of education. This research, carried out by an eminent local economist, clearly made the link between IMF influence in policy and overcrowding and understaffing in classrooms, and showed an average pupil teacher ratio of around 120:1 in rural areas and 80:1 in urban centres. This research provided national civil society groups, including members of the Sierra Leone Education For All Coalition, with evidence to back up their own education advocacy messages and processes. The research in Sierra Leone was parallel to two other studies undertaken in Mozambique and Malawi, which in turn all fed into an international report called *Confronting the Contradictions*, showing the impact of IMF public sector wage bill policies on education, which was used to support advocacy in Washington and globally.

The international report was well received, and allowed ActionAid to combine forces with others investigating the role of IMF policy in health spending to make their voices heard at the IMF in Washington. As a result, in September 2007, the IMF backed down. Public sector wage bill ceilings are no longer IMF policy, although they are still in place in some countries, including Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, the training and research has built a stronger awareness of the role of the IMF and the dynamics of policy making in the country, and this in turn has opened up the debate on appropriate macroeconomic policy and decision making processes. The capacity of national civil society actors, such as teachers' unions, school management committees, women's groups and local advocacy associations, to engage in these debates and influence or monitor policies is getting stronger, but there is still a long road to travel before the government are held truly accountable to the people.

Research, carried out by an eminent local economist, clearly made the link between IMF influence in policy and overcrowding and understaffing in classrooms, and showed an average pupil teacher ratio of around 120:1 in rural areas and 80:1 in urban centres.

> "*ActionAid is doing a good job. Before, the IMF used to come and go and we didn't even know. Now we have a very narrow space we are hoping to widen that space to galvanise ourselves and get more information on the IMF.*"
>
> Sierra Leone Teachers' Union

ActionAid

Members of the EFA coalition reflect on advocacy priorities

During my visit to Sierra Leone, I saw and heard that Sierra Leonean civil society faces many and great challenges. Civil society groups are under resourced, which leads to competition and fragmentation, and vulnerability to co-option or politicisation. There are some spaces for coordinated action, including the Education for All Coalition, but these depend to a great extent on the support, financial and facilitative, of INGOs such as ActionAid. ActionAid Sierra Leone plays a vital role in facilitating coordinated civil society action, debate and policy influence in the field of education. At the same time, government institutions are weak and dependent, and the lack of capacity and funds (and reliable data) make policy advocacy even

more difficult, and require rights-based organisations such as ActionAid to work both with civil society and government to strengthen the potential for delivering strong, accountable education policies and systems.

Inevitably, this is a difficult and slow process, but ActionAid Sierra Leone are facing the challenges head on. By building their own links within the policy team, and with other international NGOs working in Sierra Leone, they will be able to support national civil society organisations and government bodies to work together for stronger government in the interests of the people. This means building the capacity to monitor and influence policy from the ground up, along with the capacity to plan and

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Present policies lead to overcrowded schools

deliver. So, while a focus on the IMF has clearly demonstrated that the policies and activities of the national government are subject to outside influence, the preferred strategy for both policy and education in ActionAid Sierra Leone is to facilitate the development of alternative policies and push for greater accountability of national government to their people, leaving direct engagement with IMF policies and practices to their colleagues in Washington. As ActionAid's Director in Sierra Leone notes, "*International lobbying will not yield as much as we expected. We need to refocus at government level.*"

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Education On The Brink

Will the IMF's new lease on life ease or block progress towards education goals?

In April 2009, the Global Campaign for Education published a new report: *Education On The Brink: Will The IMF's New Lease On Life Ease Or Block Progress Towards Education Goals?* This report built on a series of reports published by ActionAid between 2005-2007, showing the negative impact of the IMF's macro-economic conditions on the financing of education. It focused on the new lease on life given to the IMF at the G20 meeting in London in March 2009, in the build up to which the IMF gave the impression that they had removed damaging macro-economic conditions and were uniquely well positioned to help low-income countries weather the global financial crisis. Below we summarize the findings of this excellent and timely report.

When world leaders gathered in 2000 to pledge education for all by 2015 there were 100 million children out of school. Since then there has been dramatic progress made, so that today there are 25 million fewer children out of school. Given population growth, this means that 40 million more children are in school. Clearly, progress needs to be accelerated in the coming years if the education goals are to be achieved, but with the onset of the global financial recession in 2008 there are fears that this progress may be stalled. Much depends on how governments respond to the financial crisis and whether investment in education is seen to be part of the solution to the crisis.

To date, the most significant global response to the global recession has been the meeting of the G20 in London in March 2009. Leaders at the G20 Summit emphasised their commitment to implementing national fiscal stimulus packages to maintain high spending levels and buoy global trade levels. National fiscal stimulus packages could help to protect and expand spending on education – as they have in countries like the US and UK. Indeed, investments in education and training were signalled in the G20 Communiqué as a priority to stimulate the economy – and as a key strategy to get out of the global recession. However, these warm words about education were focused on the G20 countries themselves – and most of the children out of school around the world are in low-income countries (LICs).

For LICs, the main response from the G20 was to make funds available to them through the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Sophia Evans/NB Pictures/ActionAid

A young boy studies at school

The following specific pledges were made:

- US$250 billion to be created in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), a conditionality-free allocation of the IMF's reserve currency. Sadly only 7.5% of this (US$19 billion) seems to be available for LICs.
- US$500 billion in funding pledges (for the IMF), US$250 billion available now and US$250 billion to be approved later. It is unclear what part of this will reach LICs and if it does, what conditions may be attached.
- US$6 billion in 'concessional finance' for the poorest countries to be generated by IMF gold sales. However, there is as yet no agreement on how the gold would be sold or under what conditions the funds would be available to LICs.

The sums likely to be available for LICs are much smaller than the huge sums used by rich countries for the bailouts of banks and to protect their economies. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of some, there certainly appears to be an opportunity to mobilise some funding for LICs, who amidst the crisis, may not be able to access a credit line elsewhere.

The question to raise is, what conditions will be attached to this funding? History shows how expanded lending by the IMF after previous recessions forced harmful economic policies on LICs that inhibited growth and damaged the education and health sectors. Given that the richest countries have now rejected much of this economic orthodoxy (for example, suspending public sector borrowing targets and concentrating on economic stimulus packages) it is vital that all countries are allowed to make similar choices. Education and health advocates have raised serious concerns over the years about how the IMF's traditional macroeconomic conditions have undermined, rather than facilitated, investment in education. If these conditions are continued it is unlikely that LIC governments will be able to design their own fiscal stimulus packages that will maintain education spending as most of G20 countries are planning to do. Unfortunately, in the last summit the G20 did not condition their support to the IMF on reform to these conditions. Indeed, it seems that the motivation of some of the new countries sitting at the G20 table was to get a greater say in the governance of the IMF (breaking the dominance of G8) – and not enough attention was paid to the need for wider reforms of the IMF.

An new role for the IMF

This new investment in the IMF seems to have given it a new, expanded role. Before the global financial crisis, the organisation was struggling to define its role in the world and there were serious questions raised about its legitimacy. Now the IMF not only has the resources to reassert its authority over macroeconomic policies in LICs but it also has an effective monopoly over the control and stewardship of the financial resources intended to spare countries the worst pain of the current global downturn.

On paper there are some promising signs. The Managing Director of the IMF, Dominique Strauss Kahn, has emphasised the need for reform and has promised a significant review of the conditionalities attached to loans to LICs. However, Education on the Brink examines what the IMF has done in practice since September 2008 when the financial crisis became clear. It systematically analyses every PRGF and PSI review, the new Standby Arrangements and various other new instruments the IMF has developed.

The review shows that little has yet changed in practice. LICs will benefit little from the hundreds of billions of dollars announced at the G20. They may have access to some new money, but if present trends continue, that money will come with conditions attached that actively undermine investment in education. It concludes that there is an urgent need to hold Dominique Strauss Kahn to his word and ensure that a fully comprehensive review of IMF macroeconomic conditions imposed on LICs leads to real change. Poor countries should be given the fiscal space necessary to sustain and expand their investment in education. Indeed, such investment should be seen as an integral part of the response to the present crisis, yielding both immediate benefits and long-term economic growth. As many rich countries move towards spending their way out of the recession through investing in education, poor countries, where the need is greater, should be encouraged in the same direction. Standing still is not enough when millions more children enrol in school every year and when the goal of getting all children into school by 2015 is drawing near.

A window of opportunity

The present crisis, whilst creating potential threats for investment in education, also presents a window of opportunity. Macroeconomic policies that have been entrenched for decades will need to be reviewed as part of the overhaul of the global financial system. Securing progress on education should itself be seen as an indicator of stability and as a sign of a sound economy, which is investing in the future, as well as a way to make progress in other goals and protect the most vulnerable. At present, education spending is all too often seen by the IMF and Ministries of Finance as consumption, in part because by its nature, it is made up mostly of recurrent spending, such as on teacher salaries. This mind-set needs to change and the IMF needs to promote education as an investment and factor in the growth it creates. It should be proactive in

advocating for strategic increases in education spending in response to the financial crisis, most notably in the trained teachers that underpin any effective education system.

The financial crisis should lead to a new dialogue in rich countries, between the Finance Ministers, who are guiding the policies of the IMF, and Development Ministers, who are pursuing progress on the MDGs. Better policy alignment is possible such that macroeconomic policies actively facilitate progress on education and other development goals. Finance Ministers from the G8 countries in particular need to recognise these contradictions and use their influence on the IMF's Board to demand more coherent policies, which will help LICs achieve the MDGs and EFA goals.

If the IMF proves reluctant to reform then Finance Ministers in LICs need to take the initiative themselves, opening themselves up to alternative macroeconomic frameworks that break with the received wisdom of recent decades – and which will enable them to invest in education and development. The IMF's dominant viewpoint can be challenged, as it has been by many middle- and high-income countries, which often choose to follow different economic paths to those recommended by the IMF.

Civil society actors in every LIC have a key role to play in opening up a dialogue with their Ministries of Finance about possible alternative macroeconomic policies. Discussions about the shape of the national economy should not take place behind closed doors, between the IMF and Ministries of Finance – but should be transparent and open to public scrutiny and debate. National education coalitions need to link with other civil society actors to promote such debate, building collective understanding and economic literacy. As well as arguing for a greater share of the national budget to be dedicated to education, we need to ask fundamental questions about the size of that national budget as whole.

Education on the Brink concludes with the following recommendations:

The IMF should:

- Honour commitments made by their Managing Director to reform and must remove the traditional package of macroeconomic conditions that it imposes on LICs.
- Ensure that a significant share of the resources pledged to it by the G20 reaches LICs, where the need is greatest, and that the resources are available without conditions for strategic investments, particularly in trained teachers.

The G20 should:

- Use their next meeting to condition some of the pledged money on reform to the macroeconomic conditions used by the IMF on LICs. They have given new life to the IMF and they need to insist that the most damaging restrictions on LICs are removed.
- Confirm their levels of future aid in a specific and firm enough way to allow the IMF to factor them in to their economic forecasts.
- Reallocate a proportion of the SDRs to LICs to ensure a more equitable distribution and to ensure LICs do not cut back health and education budgets to survive the economic crisis.

Ministries of Finance in LICs should:

- Re-visit their macroeconomic frameworks, focusing first on the investments needed to achieve progress on education and other development goals, and then shaping macroeconomic policy to facilitate investment in these within a sound financial framework.
- Ensure at least 20% of national budgets (and 6% of GDP) is spent on education. Ministers should also be mindful that in the current crisis this will be a reduced amount unless efforts are made to maintain overall spending levels.
- Ensure any stimulus packages include education to ensure there is effective resource allocation to protect the poorest as well as stimulate future growth.

Development/Aid Ministries in rich countries should:

- Open a dialogue with their Ministers of Finance to ensure coherence and consistency in policies and de-link their aid from IMF macroeconomic indicators.
- Deliver on their promises of more, and more predictable, aid for education. This should include specific targets for how their ODA can address the teacher crisis and allow recipient governments to recruit more trained teachers.
- Support coordinated multilateral efforts as a reformed FTI/new Global Fund for Education for All to deliver substantial, predictable aid over the long-term to at least 2015.

Ministers of Finance in rich countries should:

- Instruct their representatives in the IMF Board to revise macroeconomic conditions such that poor countries can pursue expansionary economic policies to get through the financial crisis.
- Coordinate with their colleagues to provide the promised increases in ODA to meet the MDGs and EFA.
- Co-ordinate with their colleagues to reallocate some of the SDR to ensure LICs can finance their own stimulus packages.

Legislative bodies in the countries that have power to ratify gold sales should:

- Attach policy reforms along with debt cancellation as conditions to approving the sale.

Civil society actors (in North and South) should:

- Build their skills to engage with Ministers – especially Finance Ministers – on all these issues and hold their leaders to account for progress on the right to education.

Towards a Global Fund for Education For All?

On 19th February 2009 the Global Campaign for Education circulated for consultation with its members the paper below, produced initially by the GCE in the US, discussing the case for a Global Fund for Education For All (GFEFA). This followed a GCE Board meeting decision taken in Bangladesh that the time was right to support the move towards such a Global Fund.

As noted in the covering note by Lucia Fry that was circulated with the paper:

> "*In some respects this is a return to the position taken at the very start of GCE in 1999/2000 – when GCE actively called for a Global Fund for Education at the Dakar Education For All meeting. However, GCE has been backing the Education For All Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) since its inception in 2002/3 – in part because up until now FTI has offered the best opportunity for harmonisation of donor efforts and a scaling up of aid. The GCE International Board's broad decision is clear – the context has changed and we should now seek to advocate a Global Education Fund that retains the best of FTI but which addresses its many weaknesses.*"

Key differences between FTI and the new GFEFA

- **A Global Education Fund would be an independent entity housed outside the World Bank.**
- **The balance between bilateral funding and pooled funding would be 50-50. Currently FTI aims to mobilise 90% of funds bilaterally with just 10% going through pooled funds (Catalytic Fund, principally).**
- **It would address the full EFA agenda inclusive of early childhood education, adult literacy and all children, youth and adults including hardest-to-reach and discriminated-against communities.**
- **It would have much higher level political representation than FTI.**
- **It would have an annual pledging and review conference to ensure transparency and accountability.**

Key aspects of FTI to be retained

- **A country-led process that harmonises and co-ordinates donor efforts behind a single government plan.**
- **Civil society participation at country and global level governance.**
- **Inclusivity of all low-income countries including fragile states.**

The concept paper, whilst intended purely for internal consultation with members, was somehow circulated much more widely and sparked significant debate within the FTI, the World Bank and other donors. There are now discussions of this concept taking place in most donor countries and at a high level in the US with the new Obama administration (for which the concept paper was first produced, based broadly on a longer paper by Gene Sperling, the former GCE US chair who is now in the US Treasury). During his election campaign Obama promised to increase US aid to education to US$2-3 billion a year (more than a fourfold increase). One of the aims behind the frantic discussions now taking place is to ensure that a substantial part of this money is invested in an effective multilateral mechanism - which can also then leverage a fair share of support from other donors. The present FTI lacks the political weight and ambition to absorb such resources. FTI is seeking to fill only a resource gap of US$1 billion and has not succeeded in reaching out to the most of the key countries with education challenges (81% of the children out of school live in countries not presently covered by FTI).

It is likely that developments with a Global Education Fund will now move fast – though the precise structure and operation of such a fund, and how it evolves from or interconnects with the present FTI, will require considerable discussion and consensus building. The ongoing evaluation of the FTI may also play an important role in guiding the direction of change. By the time this magazine goes to press there are likely to have been some new developments but the concept paper below provides a useful introduction to the rationale behind these developments.

GCE CONCEPT PAPER

Why do we need a Global Fund for Education?

At the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, rich countries pledged that no country with a credible plan for achieving EFA would be allowed to fail for lack of resources. Eight years on, progress towards this ideal has been painfully slow. The latest EFA Global Monitoring Report has deemed the record of donors to be a 'collective failure' and is clear that this is seriously hampering efforts to achieve EFA. By contrast, many developing countries have largely lived up to their part of the 'global compact' on education, as evidenced by the fact that for low-income countries, education's share of budgets averages 20%. Where aid has flowed, it has clearly assisted countries to accelerate their efforts: in Cambodia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, aid assisted countries to plan for and execute the abolition of school fees; in Bangladesh, aid played a central role in stipend programmes for girls at secondary level.

The following key challenges must be addressed as matter of urgency:

- Aid to basic education has stalled at US$4.4 billion per year (two-year average). US$16 billion per year is needed to achieve universal primary education,

make significant gains in adult literacy rates and early childhood care and education, and to expand lower secondary education to meet demand. There remains huge over-dependence on few donors – the Netherlands, UK and World Bank/IDA are responsible for 60% of all aid to basic education in low-income countries.

- The Education For All Fast-Track Initiative, though it has made impressive progress in some areas (notably co-ordination and harmonization), is not delivering additional aid to the level required and has failed to improve the accountability of donors. It has a low profile outside a handful of education aid specialists, and its 'brand' has been seriously dented by the disbursement issues that continue to plague the Catalytic Fund.
- President Barack Obama has set out a bold vision for expanding educational opportunity around the world and ensuring that "all children have the basic right to learn." Specifically, he has called for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including erasing the global primary education gap by 2015. In order to reach this commitment, Obama pledged to create a new Global Education Fund and to support the bipartisan Education for All Act. This was reiterated by Secretary of State Clinton in her Senate confirmation hearing.

The creation of a Global Fund for Education would provide a key opportunity to meet these challenges. Operating as a 'parent fund' encompassing a wide range of aid modalities, it would build on the key strengths and vital experience of FTI. It would be a coordinated, single global process that acts as an efficient fund disbursement mechanism, facilitates donor harmonization and promotes country ownership. It would also determine and meet country- and global-level financing gaps to assist countries to provide a minimum of nine years of schooling for even the most vulnerable children, as well as ensure full adult literacy and early childhood care and education. Importantly, it should not be set up in parallel with or as a competitor to the FTI. Rather, there should be a radical evolution of FTI, with scaled up ambition, significant reform and a renewed political profile.

Jenny Matthews/ActionAid

A global fund for education for all must support adult literacy for women like these in Kabul, Afghanistan

Key principles of a Global Fund for Education

Independence:
In order to balance and serve a broad range of actors interested in assisting the education sector while not being 'owned' exclusively by any one institution, a Global Fund for Education must be formally and legally independent of all other international institutions even as it builds strong partnerships with other agencies including the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF. The lessons learned from the FTI being housed in the World Bank include the difficulty in branding the initiative as other than a World Bank facility, lack of clear differentiation between FTI funds and Bank – IDA and IBRD – funds in their reporting and, finally, unacceptably low disbursement of pooled funds due to 'upstream' conditionality being applied to FTI-eligible education plans by WB task managers. This has constrained FTI from developing an independent global profile and has been a limiting factor in its efforts to reach the scale of resource mobilization required to achieve Education for All. This independence would not preclude a more limited fiduciary role for the World Bank such as it currently fulfils as trustee of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Enhanced multilateralism:
A multilateral GFEFA would act as an umbrella mechanism to maintain, coordinate and measure multiple channels of funding, including both bilateral and multilateral financing as in the FTI. It should seek to achieve a 50-50 split between bilateral and multilateral assistance and ensure that all funds apply common standards for evaluating, endorsing and directly supporting national education plans. Diversity of instruments for effective aid delivery, including budget support, will be valued, offering each donor the opportunity to employ their preferred modality. Methods should be sought to ensure that contributions via budget support can be calculated, declared and acknowledged as contributions to the GFEFA

Participatory governance:
Shared ownership and participatory governance involving a range of stakeholders including

representatives from developing countries and civil society at the global and national levels will be key to the success of the Global Fund for Education. One of the core strengths of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is that civil society and developing countries have equal representation on the governance structure and are included in the country-level planning and proposal process. We encourage a Global Fund for Education to adhere to principles of inclusion of civil society participation in national education planning that were agreed at the Dakar World Conference on Education in 2000.

Transparency and mutual accountability:
The success of the Global Fund for Education will depend on inspiring the confidence of a range of stakeholders that it is achieving desirable outcomes. The best way to demonstrate momentum toward the goal of Education for All is through a commitment to transparency with respect to financing and key policy decisions. Transparency has played a critical role in building public support and internal learning at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Governments are accountable first to their citizens to develop ambitious plans, and allocate their own resources. They must also be accountable to donors for transparent, efficient and equitable disbursement of funds and achievement of results, in terms of how money is being spent, the numbers of children gaining access to school, the quality of education and that the most vulnerable children (including those in conflict areas) are benefiting.

At the same time, donors should be held accountable for their pledged funding commitments, closing the financing gap for basic education and aligning funding with approved national education plans, co-ordination and harmonization, making their aid predictable and long-term, and available to spend on recurrent costs, especially teacher salaries.

Such accountability could be strengthened by:

- An independent evaluation of costing including country level financing gaps, the global gap and specific target areas such as the cost of reaching the most vulnerable and hard to reach children
- An annual pledging and review conference that publicly shares information on progress on both sides of the 'compact'. This would be a transparent forum in which donors' commitments to country plans would be announced. This would reveal which donors are living up to their part of the 'compact'. Bilateral and pooled funding/multilateral commitments would both be counted in through this process. On the same occasion, partner country representatives would report on the past year's expenditures and achievements and would know straight away what gaps remain outstanding for their next year's cycle.
- Creation of a specific financing envelope available to finance national civil society advocacy on education, including monitoring governments' budget formation, expenditure (including aid) and policy development.

Predictability:
Ministries of Education are best served by predictable long term funding disbursed in a timely manner in order to initiate meaningful education funding projects. Since 2006, the UK has been financing countries' ten-year education plans, the EC's European Development Fund is pioneering MDG contracts, which offer guaranteed funding over a six-year period, and the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria provides grants for five years. A Global Fund for Education should provide long-term, predictable funding for no less than six years in order to maximize the impact of financing on basic education completion.

For more information contact Lucia Fry: lucia@campaignforeducation.org

Equity on the agenda

The 2009 Global Monitoring Report

by David Archer

The 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report, the first under the editorship of Kevin Watkins, places equity issues squarely on the international education agenda. Whereas too often in the past global reports have focused on national averages, this report tries to get under the skin, to the sub-national level, highlighting education disparities based on gender, location (rural/ urban), language, ethnicity and disability. Beyond the more traditional focus on differences in access, there is a valuable emphasis on the inequalities in learning outcomes. Furthermore, there is a welcome priority placed on the urgency of addressing teacher shortages and rising class sizes. Overall, the report will prove a useful resource for anyone engaged in education policy or campaigning work. This article touches on some of the key issues raised.

The GMR 2009 challenges the way decentralisation policies have been implemented in many countries, pointing out that decentralisation can be a major threat to equity unless there is a strong redistributive role retained in the centre. It is very timely to challenge this, as decentralisation has become the default policy followed by most governments, often with support from the World Bank. The report notes that devolution of governance responsibility may be dangerous, as local elites will often capture the spaces created. Most governments have devolved responsibilities by central decree without investing in awareness raising or training of school management committees – which would be necessary if new local powers are not to be seized by a small group. Here, Nepal is useful example. High caste elites tend to control SMCs and the decisions they take pay little regard to the

needs of poorer, low-caste children. As I observed on a recent visit to Nepal, a World Bank programme has been giving SMCs almost absolute power over teachers, choosing whom to hire and fire, fixing teacher salary levels and deciding whether to employ trained or untrained teachers. The effect of this on the teaching profession is devastating – and it does not increase democracy or accountability in the system when the decision-making is controlled by an unrepresentative group. There is an urgent need in Nepal, and in many other countries, to strengthen district or local education authorities, mandating them to monitor equity issues (both in terms of process and outcomes) and play a re-distributive role. National governments must equally prioritise investments that will even out disparities and inequalities.

Teachers

The report is alert to the importance of teacher conditions – highlighting how 'flexibility' is undermining the profession. It is bold in challenging performance-related pay, noting that attempts to impose such schemes from outside (by donors) on systems that are not able to manage it will increase corruption and misuse of resources. The GMR stresses the need for an adequate supply of well-trained and well-motivated teachers who are well distributed, including to disadvantaged areas, providing incentives for teachers to work in such locations. However, the GMR does not have enough analysis on the impact of the rapid spread of non-professional teachers and on the breaking down of the teaching profession. There are now so many different categories of teachers that there is little coherence, transparency or career progression. The terms used seem to be constantly multiplying: contract teachers, licensed or unlicensed teachers, para-teachers, unqualified or under-qualified teachers, community or local teachers. This abundance of words for teachers does not add up to an abundance of teachers. Over 18 million more teachers are needed around the world by 2015, and we need to ensure that these are trained teachers, entering a valued profession where there is a clear path of progression and continued development. We are a long way from this and I hope that the next GMR can look in more detail at what is happening to the profession and why, looking at changes to entry qualifications, training courses, contracts and conditions.

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Jenny Matthews/ActionAid

Disadvantaged children in Wadia, Ethiopia

Over 18 million more teachers are needed around the world by 2015, and we need to ensure that these are trained teachers, entering a valued profession where there is a clear path of progression and continued development.

Private sector role

The GMR raises some important questions about the private sector, challenging the view of many donors that the private sector could play a key role in extending access and improving quality. Again, there are serious equity outcomes and often there are serious quality concerns where provision is unregulated and unsupervised. Voucher systems have not raised achievement or addressed disparities – even in the case of Chile, which is often trumpeted, the results are disappointing. It seems that private schools offer no advantage once adjustments are made for socio-economic status. The Swedish model, which some are now seeing as a solution, is premised on there having been a strong public system for decades and is not exportable. The report suggests that increasing choice is likely to increase inequality – and that choice and competition have become dangerous myths in the education sector.

I would like to see this analysis extended, with challenges made to the evidence based used by people like Professor Tooley who advocates for low cost private schools targeted at poor parents in India. The truth is that when efforts are made to improve public schools (as recently happened in Tamil Nadu), parents abandon such low-cost private schools and send their children to the government system. The key strategic challenge is to

The key strategic challenge is to make government schools work – to fix the public sector not abandon it. Government provision will be key to the rapid expansion of systems that is needed.

make government schools work – to fix the public sector not abandon it. Government provision will be key to the rapid expansion of systems that is needed.

I believe a similar challenge needs to be made to NGOs who act as service providers, running their own community schools. The private sector and NGOs will only ever provide education to a small percentage of children compared to the government – and it is a better use of NGO time and resources to hold the government system to account than to build small-scale solutions or petty empires.

Financing

One other refreshing dimension of the GMR 2009 is that it takes a challenging line towards international donors, showing how many are backtracking on their promises. There are gaps in resources but much bigger gaps than those acknowledged by Fast Track Initiative. It is good to see the exposing of donors who have the right rhetoric but whose practice falls far short. Too many donors count, as contributions to EFA, their investments in higher education or to education in middle-income countries or aid that is largely made up of technical assistance or scholarships and ends up benefiting their own country. France, Germany and the US – as well as the World Bank – all have a case to answer. In the next edition I hope this can be investigated further. Issues around the FTI's low disbursement rates owing to World Bank procurement requirements warrant particular attention.

Whilst the donors are challenged, overall there is not enough on the domestic financing of education. The GMR notes that many governments spend under 6% of GDP – half of those in Africa with data spend under 4% and many in Asia. Part of the problem is domestic priority but a big part of the problem is also the IMF and the GMR fails to address this (despite a brief mention in the 2008 report, which showed that it was on their radar). This needs to be explored more especially with teachers being recognised as fundamental. The GCE report Education on the Brink (see article on page 39) reveals why this is so important. The GMR emphasises the need to link education planning to poverty reduction strategies but does not look enough at the need to reform wider macro-economic policies and the need to challenge/ engage with the IMF who are the dominant force influencing most finance ministries.

Conclusion

It is difficult to do justice to a report of 450 pages in a short article. There is much more to praise and much more to challenge. I would like to have seen a stronger rights-based framework used; I would like to have seen more critical analysis of the debates around learning outcomes. Certainly, I would like to have read more about adult literacy, acknowledged last year in the GMR 2008 as the most neglected of all EFA goals – and then neglected by the GMR 2009! But, overall, the report has much to celebrate and is worth a read. The next report, in 2010, will focus on the most marginalised and disadvantaged – those who education systems fail to reach or fail to teach. This should act as an excellent opportunity for sustaining a focus around equity in education systems – and I look forward to its release at the end of the year.

To see the GMR please go to www.efareport.unesco.org

From Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) to Civil Society Education Funds (CSEFs)

by Jill Hart

The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) was an education advocacy project funded by DFID and jointly managed by ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children. The project, which operated in 16 Commonwealth countries, was established in 2002 and ended on 31 December 2008. However, although CEF has now ended, the important work done by civil society education advocacy groups around the world continues and Civil Society Education Funds (CSEFs) have been created to support this work.

Although it was a limited-term project, CEF was very proactive in seeking sustainable funding of coordinated civil society education work beyond its own timeframe and geographic scope. In 2007, CEF published a research report, Funding Change: sustaining civil society advocacy in education, which clearly showed that while donors are increasingly offering coordinated and strategic support to governments, their support for civil society remains fragmented and unstrategic. The report made a strong case for the creation of Civil Society Education Funds, to be run by inter-agency boards, providing strategic grants and capacity building to strengthen education work by civil society organisations committed to Education for All.

In June 2008, CEF held a series of major events to celebrate its achievements and discuss their sustainability post-CEF. The events included a seminar at the Bank of England, an evening reception at Buckingham Palace and a working session on CSEFs at Dover House. In addition to civil society education activists and representatives of NGOs and

Sri Lanka: campaigning against the closure of rural schools

With CEF support, education NGOs and other civil society organisations came together to form the national Coalition for Education Development (CED). CED has representation in all the provinces of Sri Lanka and through its membership at the grassroots level it runs several campaigns. For example, in Uva province, CED members focused on 10 rural schools that were under threat of closure. In general, Sri Lanka has an excellent record on access to basic education but the government seemed intent on achieving cost savings by closing down 'inefficient schools'. CED provided training that mobilised pressure groups – teachers, parents, children and eminent people in the villages – to be active partners in the education process and to demand an end to the closure of rural schools. After compiling information, the pressure groups held open public debates with policy makers and local politicians on the issues facing local children if the schools to be closed. They were able to reverse the 10 school closures, and CED has since supported similar campaigns to protect schools in other remote rural areas. To date they have helped 200 rural communities defend their local schools against closure. This helps ensure that the almost universal access to primary education that has been achieved in Sri Lanka is not lost.

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CEF Kenya Coordinator, William Migwi speaks to Dr Joyce Malombe of ELMA Philanthropies outside Buckingham Palace

coalitions, participants included representatives of bilateral aid agencies, the European Commission, the World Bank and the Fast Track Initiative secretariat, foundations, trusts, and private sector organisations. During the events, several donor representatives suggested that a proposal for CSEFs be presented to the Education Program Development Fund (EPDF) of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI).

As a response, CEF supported the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to develop the CSEF funding proposal. The proposal illustrated how CSEFs offer a practical and strategic way to support civil society involvement in education and that this is necessary given the significant shift in roles CSOs are expected to play, moving beyond being partners in implementing projects and increasingly contributing to policy dialogue (in the formulation of plans) and independent monitoring (acting as watchdogs, tracking budgets).

The model proposed was to establish regional CSEFs in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with the GCE having overall oversight. The regional funds, to be hosted by regional education coalitions (ANCEFA, ASPBAE and CLADE), will accept proposals from national civil society coalitions for funding to enable them to assume an active role in FTI and other education

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Presenters at CEF seminar at the Bank of England

policy processes, as well as to create national CSEF structures to sustain this work in the longer term. The national coalition proposals will be assessed by regional funding committees against set criteria.

In December 2008, the proposal for regional CSEF work was approved by the EPDF Committee. This provided $6.5m for activities in 2009-2010. Following this decision, CEF provided start-up grants directly to GCE and the regional CSEF hosts for the initial few months until FTI funds are disbursed. CEF stakeholders were delighted that the CSEF work was going forward as CEF itself ended. In addition to the achievements made by CEF partners in 16 countries, the CSEF support from the FTI is a remarkable achievement, demonstrating a recognition by many bilateral and multilateral donors of the vital role of civil society in making systemic improvements to education systems. Whilst CEF was supported by just one bilateral donor (DFID) the involvement of multiple donors on the EPDF committee (including France, Spain, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, Australia, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank) is a key step in moving to a more harmonised approach towards funding civil society groups working on education.

For more information about CEF, including the final CEF report, please visit: www.commonwealtheducation-fund.org

To learn more about CSEFs, please contact: david.archer@actionaid.org

Terry Moore

Remembering... Eddie George 1938–2009

Eddie George, former governor of the Bank of England, died on 18th April 2009 after a long battle with cancer. One of the lesser known facts about Eddie George is that he chaired the Oversight Committee of the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), set up by Gordon Brown in 2002. CEF ran from 2002 to 2008, managed jointly by ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children. As the recent final evaluation shows, CEF had a significant impact in education across 16 low-income Commonwealth countries in Africa and South Asia.

Eddie George was passionate about education and a powerful advocate for CEF. As the son of a post office clerk, he was the first child in the history of his family to go to secondary school. He was determined to ensure that all children around the world should have the same chances in life that he did.

As he commented in 2008 "*I have seen in my personal life and my professional career, how education transforms lives. Education gives real opportunities for a better future to children born in poverty. Education can transform countries, generating growth in the economy at all levels.*"

Eddie vigorously supported CEF's innovative approach of bringing together different groups into broad national coalitions in each country, so that education would become a top political priority and matter of open public debate. In the 16 CEF countries, non-governmental organisations, teachers' unions, parents' groups, faith-based organisations and business leaders united to call for greater investment in education. These coalitions shared innovative approaches that would help get all children into school, influencing government policy and improving transparency.

Whilst still Governor, Eddie hosted a series of breakfasts, lunches and dinners at the Bank of England to promote the CEF with prominent business leaders. Using his own personal story as a starting point, Eddie would invariably convince his guests that nothing was more important than achieving the agreed international development goal of getting every child into school by 2015. This, he would argue, would be a historic landmark for humanity – and one that is eminently achievable if people come together. When he returned from a visit to India in 2005, where he met CEF partners, he was more energised than ever, telling a reception afterwards at 11 Downing Street that education was the key to development and the best investment any government could make.

One example of CEF work was assisting School Management Committees to engage with local authorities to find ways to improve schools in disadvantaged communities, so that more children would be able to enrol and stay in school. One schoolgirl in Ghana said: "*I used to walk seven kilometres through the bush every morning to school in a nearby community because there were no teachers in my community school. I always felt tired when I got to school.*" Children like this are at risk of missing lessons or dropping out altogether, but thanks to efforts of CEF partners this girl and others re-enrolled in their community school, which was revitalised by being supplied with two new teachers. In support of the work of the international community, the CEF has helped to reduce the number of children who were out of school from 100 million in 2002 to 75 million in 2006. Clearly more needs to be done in the coming years. There can be no more fitting legacy to Eddie than for people to work together in pursuit of this historic goal.

Eddie called primary school the gateway to the rest of his life, saying, "*I know from my own experience – encouraged by my parents to take proper advantage of universal primary education in this country, which led on to scholarships to secondary school and university, which my parents couldn't possibly otherwise have afforded – that education is the absolute foundation of individual economic and social progress – and of the contribution which individuals can make to the economic and social progress of the community as a whole.*"

Everyone involved with CEF (from the UK, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, The Gambia Uganda, and Zambia) will remember Eddie's passionate conviction and leadership. He will be greatly missed.