



Putting the 'E' into NEPAD:

EFA and Africa's renaissance

Summary

More than half of all children in sub-Saharan Africa never get to finish primary school, and 120 million adults across the region cannot read, write or add up a column of numbers. At the current rate of progress, Africa will not get every child into school until 2100. This is a travesty of human rights and a tragedy of human capital. Unless it is urgently addressed, neither economic take-off nor democratic consolidation will be possible and NEPAD will remain a castle – or perhaps a presidential villa – in the sky.

GCE and ANCEFA propose the following measures to end the African education crisis.

First, as a precondition and a catalyst for growth with equity, African countries must increase and sustain education spending in line with the agreed regional target of 6% of GDP, with at least 3% of GDP set aside for basic education.

Second, donor countries must keep their promises to share the costs of achieving the EFA goals. By the end of 2003, all 18 of the countries participating in the EFA Fast Track Initiative should receive rapid, flexible and full funding to implement agreed national plans. A timetable must be agreed for expanding FTI support to more countries.

Third, increased government and donor spending needs to be targeted at the following priority areas, which are also the areas that the NEPAD secretariat should target:

- Ensuring access for girls and children affected by HIV-AIDS
- Making education free, universal and compulsory
- Improving the training, morale and status of teachers
- Reversing the decline in spending on illiterate adults and out-of-school youth

Finally, a task team should be established in the NEPAD secretariat to map out a NEPAD strategy for human development. This team should develop concrete action plans based on large-scale partnerships between governments, donors and civil society to tackle the priority education issues listed above. The NEPAD task team also has a particular role to

play in finding ways to rebuild system capacity in countries emerging from conflict and other low-income countries under stress.

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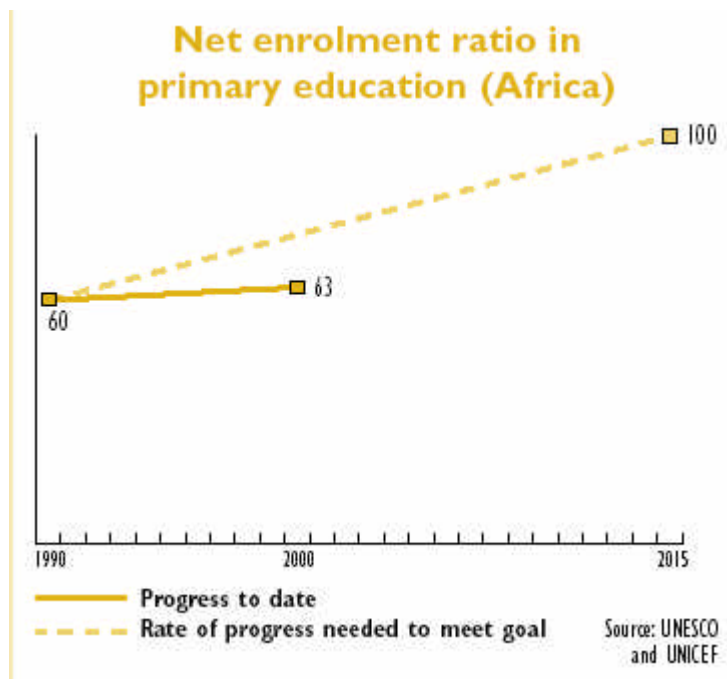
1. EFA: the missing ingredient for Africa's renaissance

As the OAU recognised in 1998 when it launched the Decade for Education, and as African ministers of education acknowledged in 2000 when they committed themselves to the goal of Education for All by 2015, the African renaissance cannot begin unless and until we end Africa's education crisis.

Universal completion of at least primary education, especially for girls, is the only proven vaccine against HIV-AIDS and the single most effective way to reduce malnutrition and cut child mortality. Children born to educated women are half as likely to die before the age of five.ⁱ

Education also makes a strong direct contribution to economic growth. Each year of schooling directly raises an individual's productivity, even in agriculture. And research shows that only once countries attain an average level of at least 6 years schooling are they able to shift economic gears from stagnation to high and sustained growth.ⁱⁱ Against this background, consider the true implications of the fact that fewer than half of African children are finishing primary education and that completion rates are actually falling in 17 African countries. At the current rate of progress, Africa will not even achieve universal primary *enrolment* until the next century (see Chart 1 below).ⁱⁱⁱ

Chart 1



The challenge is stiff, but our history shows that we can reverse the tide. Some of the fastest educational progress that the world has ever seen was achieved by African states just after independence. With impressive injections of political will and financial resources, they transformed elitist colonial schools into a genuinely mass education system within a few years. Thousands of new schools were built, tens of thousands of teachers were trained, new curriculae were drawn up and literacy programmes sprang up everywhere. However, the resulting gains in enrolment and literacy began to erode during the 1980s and 1990s – when investment in education withered, schools were allowed to crumble, pedagogical innovation ground to a halt, and teaching became an increasingly unattractive vocation for the best and the brightest young graduates.

Donors purported to come to the rescue with dozens of projects, programmes and initiatives but the amount of aid that they actually delivered was wholly inadequate to the need. The real value of bilateral aid flows to education fell by nearly a third over the Jomtien decade and Africa received less than half of the total – even though it is estimated that about 85% of the EFA financing gap lies in Africa.^{iv} According to our own research, bilateral donors spent only about \$400m on basic education in Africa in 2000, or about the same as the cost of the recent G8 summit in Evian.^v Multilateral commitments to education in Africa also fell sharply over the 1990s; at the end of the 1990s, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for only 11% of total World Bank assistance to education.^{vi}

Worse, donor money was often used to export inappropriate or impractical policies from one developing country to another, most notoriously the disastrous cost-sharing policies that denied millions of poor children an education. Donors exerted growing influence where governments were either unable or unwilling to lead.^{vii}

If African countries are serious about the goals and vision of NEPAD, they must now reclaim universal, free, compulsory and meaningful education as an immediate national priority and a public responsibility. The challenges of HIV-AIDS, poverty, conflict and democratisation make it more urgent than ever before to reverse the decades-long decline of our education systems and to relaunch the liberation project of making quality education the birthright of every African child.

2. Commitment to education: The roll call in 2003

Encouragingly, 10 African countries (see Table 1 below) made good progress on increasing primary school completion rates during the 1990s. Nine of these are now on target to achieve the 2015 goal. Among other things, this shows what African states can achieve in a relatively short period with relatively modest investments. But at least 17 African countries actually went backwards during the 1990s, and others stagnated. All in all, the overwhelming majority of African countries will fail to meet 2015 goal – unless they take urgent action.

A good plan can be regarded as the first step towards putting rhetoric into action. Very few African countries can claim to have developed credible plans for achieving the Education for All goals; few of those that may have “credible” plans can claim to have developed or reviewed them in a participatory manner. As of mid-2002, according to UNESCO, only 13 countries had a completed or almost completed national plan for achieving the EFA goals.^{viii}

If public spending is the key indicator of genuine commitment, equally few African countries are passing the test. Research shows that few countries have achieved and sustained universal primary education without spending at least 3% of GDP. However, in the 29 African countries summarised in Table 2 below, median spending on primary education is less than half that level.

Table 1: Trends in Completion Rates– 10 Best and 10 Worst

COUNTRY	Primary Completion Rate (PCR) in 1990	PCR, Most Recent Year (MRY)	Average Annual Increase (%), 1990 to MRY	PCR in 2015 on current trend rate
Gainers				
1. Cape Verde	55	117	7.75	*
2. South Africa	76	98	4.32	*
3. Malawi	30	50	4	(2003)
4. Egypt	77	99	3.6	*
5. Gambia	40	70	3.33	(2002)
6. Namibia	70	90	2.86	(2001)
7. Togo	41	63	2.5	(2009)
8. Zimbabwe	97	113	2.29	(2014)
9. Gabon	71	80	2.25	(2004)
10. Uganda	39	61	2.21	94
Losers				
1. Zambia	97	80	-3.4	31
2. Congo, Rep	61	44	-1.69	19
3. Cameroon	57	43	-1.53	19
4. Kenya	63	58	-1	38
5. Madagascar	34	27	-0.93	11
6. Central Af. Rep	28	19	-0.88	6
7. Congo Dem Rep	48	40	-0.82	27
8. Nigeria	72	67	-0.53	59
9. Comoros	35	33	-0.5	23
10. Cote d'Ivoire	44	40	-0.39	34

Notes: Trend rate is average annual percentage point change in primary completion rate from 1990 to most recent year. Data for most recent year are generally for 1999; data therefore do not reflect the impact of recent policy changes such as the abolition of fees in Tanzania and Kenya. * indicates country has already achieved universal primary completion and (year) in parentheses indicates date that goal will be reached. *Source: World Bank 2002, Achieving Education for All by 2015: Simulation Results for 47 Low-Income Countries (Technical Annex).*

The majority of African children denied the right to education are poor, rural and female. Africa must nearly double the net enrolment of girls in order to reach the 2015 universal primary education goal.^{ix} Increasingly, there is evidence that children from households affected by HIV-AIDS are also losing out on educational opportunities.^x

A fundamental first step to reach girls and the very poor, including AIDS-affected households, is to drop fees and charges at least through the end of the primary cycle. Abolition of fees has already transformed enrolment levels of girls and the very poor in Uganda and Malawi. In the context of deepening poverty and inequality across the continent, it is also necessary for governments and donors to create national incentive programmes (such as free school meals or subsidies linked to regular attendance) that help the poorest families overcome the many hidden costs of keeping a child in school. Incentive programmes have helped to raise girls' enrolment and completion in The Gambia, Malawi and other countries.

Rich countries and the international financial institutions must also keep their side of the EFA bargain. The World Bank has admitted that even with substantially increased government spending and major efficiency reforms, most African countries will still need additional donor financing to attain the 2005 and 2015 goals. In fact, a 7-fold increase in aid to African education is needed – and more aid needs to be freed up as pooled funding for the core running costs of education systems, instead of being diverted into capital projects and technical assistance.^{xi} Currently, as much as 75 cents of every aid dollar spent on education goes to technical assistance, of which a large share is spent in donor countries.^{xii}

Table 2: Completion Rates and Education Spending

Country	Completion Rate (MRY)	Education Spending as % GDP	Primary Education Spending as % GDP
Angola	29	2.4	1
Benin	39	2.5	1.6
Burkina Faso	25	2.5	1.6
Burundi	25	2.5	1.6
Cameroon	43	1.7	1.1
CAR	19	1.2	0.6
Chad	19	1.7	1.1
Congo Dem	40	0.3	0.2
Cote d'Ivoire	40	3.5	1.7
Eritrea	35	2.8	1.5
Ethiopia	24	2.7	1.2
Gambia	70	3.1	1.6
Ghana	64	3.8	1.4
Guinea	34	2	1.8
Guinea Bissau	31	1.9	0.7
Kenya	58	6.3	2.8
Malawi	50	3.6	1.8
Mali	23	2.3	1.1
Mozambique	36	2	1
Niger	31	2.9	1.8
Rwanda	33	3.2	1.4
Senegal	41	3.4	1.5
Sierra Leone	37	3.5	1.8
Sudan	35	1.8	0.9
Tanzania	59	1.8	1.1
Togo	63	3.8	1.8
Uganda	82	3.2	1.7
Zambia	80	2.3	1
Zimbabwe	103	7.1	3.3

Average	43.7	2.8	1.4
Median	37	2.5	1.5

Source: World Bank, *A Chance for Every Child* (Washington, 2002).

The EFA Fast Track Initiative was launched in 2002 to ensure that all credible plans for achieving EFA receive accelerated or 'fast-track' donor support. The FTI has been billed as a way to improve the targeting and coordination of aid, while also encouraging governments to 'fast-track' reforms so that quality and financial sustainability are improved even as access is expanded. The 18 countries selected for the first phase of the FTI have already embarked on difficult and ambitious reforms, yet only a trickle of donor funding has so far been promised, let alone actually disbursed. There are growing concerns that the 'indicative framework' for system reform is being used to generate a standardised blueprint that will be rigidly and non-transparently applied without any consultation with civil society. Moreover, no mechanism for expanding beyond the first 18 countries has been agreed. If the donor community is to maintain its own credibility, it is urgent for more funds to be released, for flexibility and local ownership to be demonstrated and for more countries to be invited to join.

3. Our demands to the AU

GCE and ANCEFA ask the AU to endorse and actively promote the following measures to end the African education crisis.

1. As a precondition and a catalyst for growth with equity, African countries must increase and sustain education spending in line with the agreed regional target of 6% of GDP, with at least 3% of GDP set aside for basic education.
2. Donor countries must keep their promises to share the costs of achieving the EFA goals. By the end of 2003, all 18 of the countries participating in the EFA Fast Track Initiative should receive rapid, flexible and full funding to implement agreed national plans. A timetable must be agreed for expanding FTI support to more countries.
3. Increased government and donor spending needs to be targeted at the following priority areas, which are also the areas that the NEPAD secretariat should target:
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 - b. Making education free, universal and compulsory
 - c. Improving the training, morale and status of teachers
 - d. Reversing the decline in spending on illiterate adults and out-of-school youth
4. Finally, a task team should be established in the NEPAD secretariat to map out a NEPAD strategy for human development. This team should develop concrete action plans based on large-scale partnerships between governments, donors and civil society to tackle the priority education issues listed above. The NEPAD task

team also has a particular role to play in finding ways to rebuild system capacity in countries emerging from conflict and other low-income countries under stress.

END NOTES

ⁱ World Bank, *Education and HIV-AIDS: A window of hope* (Washington, 2002); UNFPA, *State of World Population* (Geneva, 2002).

ⁱⁱ World Bank, *A Chance for Every Child* (Washington, 2002); Azariadis, Costas and Drazen. 1990. Threshold Externalities in Economic Development. *Quarterly Journal of Economic Research* 105 (2) pp 501-526.

ⁱⁱⁱ UNDP and UNICEF, *The Millennium Development Goals in Africa* (New York, 2002).

^{iv} UNESCO, *Global EFA Monitoring Report 2002* (Paris: UNESCO, 2002), Table 5.7, p. 173; World Bank, "Achieving Education for All by 2015: Simulation Results for 47 Low Income Countries", draft, processed, March 2002, p. 63;

^v Global Campaign for Education, *Education Funding Database* (Brussels, Nov. 2002).

^{vi} Kevin Watkins, *The Oxfam Education Report* (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000), p. 242.

^{vii} ANCEFA, *The Challenge of Achieving EFA in Africa: Civil Society Perspectives to MINEDAF VIII* (UNESCO, 2002).

^{viii} Survey of May 2002, updated July 2002, Sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO-BREDA.

^{ix} Global Campaign for Education, *A Fair Chance: Attaining Gender Equality in Basic Education by 2005* (GCE, 2002).

^x Paul Bennell, Karin Hyde and Nicola Swainson, *The impact of the HIV-AIDS epidemic on the education sector in sub-Saharan Africa: a synthesis of findings and recommendations of three country studies* (Brighton: Centre for International Education, 2002).

^{xi} World Bank, *Achieving Education for All by 2015* (processed, March 2002).

^{xiii} Paul Bennell and Dominic Furlong, "Has Jomtien made any difference? Trends in donor funding for education and basic education since the late 1980s", *World Development* 26(1): 45-59. OECD DAC, "Strengthening Development Partnerships: A Working Checklist", processed, 1998