

ICAE's view of the 2010 EFA GMR

The 2010 *Education For All* Global Monitoring Report (GMR) of UNESCO continues the very positive tradition of publishing every year an empirical assessment of the EFA objectives. This contribution done with quality is crucial for both decision-makers and civil society organizations.

In 2010, the GMR has introduced an important innovation, the Deprivation and marginalization in Education (DME) data set. This “education poverty line index is especially crucial within a lifelong learning perspective. This index, based on a minimal length of initial education (four years of initial schooling within the 17-22 age group) provides in fact a factor of predictability for further participation in learning activities all along the adult life course. We know indeed that the length and quality of initial education earlier in life does influence greatly the possibility of participating later in adult learning activities. The data provided on this indicator are worrying. The Report identifies 42 countries where 30% of the 17-22 age groups are under the education poverty lines. In eleven countries in Sub Saharan Africa, 50% of this age group are starting their adult life under the education poverty line.

As to EFA objectives 3 and 4 regarding youth out of school and adult basic education, the 2010 GMR is clear: there is no significant change since 1999. Still 71 million teenagers have had no access to any kind of schooling. Still today, 16% of world's adult population, 759 million adults, never had access to any kind of schooling, and two third of them are women.

The old argument of the Brentwood family on the fact that adult literacy is not a priority in relation to the urgency of children basic education is still being conveyed, in spite of strong evidence to the contrary. Indeed, we know by facts, substantiated through so many research reports, that adult literacy is an investment urgently needed in all areas of activities. We know that parental literacy is needed to ensure the success of EFA objectives 1 and 2 for children in school, as well as for the quality of early childhood. We are all aware that adult literacy in the form of agricultural extension is a key factor to increase the much needed productivity of local food production. We all recognize that health literacy and health promotion can get us out of the cul-de-sac of our health public system by improving the quality of curative services, decreasing the demand for health services and improving the health condition of people. Our experience shows the important role of adult education in ensuring gender justice, as long, however, as gender becomes an integral and cross-cutting issue in all areas of adult learning.

We are convinced through experience that rehabilitation of detainees could not be durable without giving them opportunities to improve their life and work skills. We have learned that basic education related to environment and mobilization of such knowledge in local communities is a necessary component of any efficient environmental policy. Indeed, human resource development is fundamental to addressing the natural resource crises that face planet earth.

Securing the right of adults to learn is a necessity for efficient implementation of all EFA objectives and to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Universal primary education could not be reached without an intergenerational approach, without a two-pronged policy perspective in basic education that is attentive to both children and adults. We could not achieve the MDGs goals without active and creative participation of adult women and men at local, national and global level. To reach these MDGs, we could not wait 30 years - the time required to uplift, through children's education alone, the basic qualification of the adult population in any society. Today, five years away from the target year of EFA and MDG, 90% of the population of 2015 has already left formal schooling, and 16% of these did not even have any access to basic education, and much more live under the *Education Poverty Line*.

In this context, the urgent need for action on adult literacy is evident. To that end, as required in the Belem Framework for Action, a section in the GMR will be needed in the future to track *investment and adequacy of resources in (adult) literacy in each country and at the global level*.

The denial of adult literacy, this discrimination of basic education based on age is not only ethically unacceptable, but socially and economically perilous for our societies. Literacy, states the Report, remains among the most neglected of all education goals. This discrimination is true not only in the accessibility figures and investment data, but also in the EFA agenda and the exercise themselves. The EFA global operation, through originally based on a lifelong learning perspective without discrimination based on age, has become an age based selective process since the Dakar conference in 1999, an exercise distorted by a neglect of the learning needs of adult women and men, a factual trend well documented all along by the series of *Global Monitoring Reports* since then.

In its second part, the 2010 GMR explains how the current global financial and economic crisis, unless important changes are being made, may very well put additional pressure on national education budget which are already largely considered insufficient (lack of 16\$us billion) to meet the EFA goals. The 2010 report indicates that, in that difficult context, educational expenses in Sub-Saharan Africa could be slashed by more than 4.5 billion us dollars. This new context is

even more alarming for EFA objectives 3 and 4 which are by now severely underfinanced. The current critical state of public finance in less developed countries and the serious decrease since 2007 (22%) of assistance from developed countries, as documented in the 2010 GMR report give us serious reason to be worry for the near future.

The 2010 is innovating in its demonstration of marginalization of groups of people, on deprivation in initial education. However, in its analysis of EFA goal 3 on the “learning needs of young people and adults,” though referring appropriately to the uneven development of vocational education and training for youth, remains almost silent on the work-related needs of adults in both formal and informal economy.

Sections of the 2010 GMR Report are dedicated to EFA Goals 3 and 4. But it still falls short of reporting, with similar rigor and comprehensiveness, on learning needs of adults and on adult basic and continuing education. Regarding the Fast Track Initiative (FTI)’s, an area almost neglected in the former reports, the 2010 edition gives due attention to this important program. It underlines the need for countries to participate more significantly in the decision making process. It compares the positive mobilization of funds done by the Global Health Fund in comparison with the limited success of FTI. It remains however discreet on two other issues: first, the FTI’s inattention to the adult learning demands regarding literacy and life skills and, second, the current macro-economic policies which presently blocks countries from investing adequately in education.

ICAE’s members find the yearly EFA Report an essential tool for their informed and data based advocacy action. They recommend highly that UNESCO maintain and allocate more resources to this key yearly monitoring global exercise. Nevertheless, they would have like the 2010 GMR Report on marginalized people to give more attention to adult learning – an essential tool the majority marginalized and poor need to fight disparity and poverty: in enabling young women and men seek better and just employment and livelihood opportunities; or for adult immigrants and displaced persons, the skills to master another national written language to protect their rights and well-being; or for workers and peasants deprived of their rights to acquire basic literacy skills, a second chance to help improve their conditions.

As recommended in Belem at CONFINTEA VI, we hope that next year the EFA GMR will gives priority to this marginalized but crucial area of EFA.