EDUCATION FOR ALL

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

Working Document

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PREFACE

Six years after the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All, there has been definite progress in basic education — not in every country, nor as much as we had hoped, but significant steps have been taken toward the ambitious goal of Education for All. This report presents the main findings of the Mid-Decade Review of Progress towards Education for All, a worldwide exercise carried out during 1995-1996 to assess the progress made since the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. Information about the Review exercise is given in Annex.

Part I of this report provides a broad overview of the changing world context since 1990 and its impact on the development of education. It then outlines some of the advances made, and problems encountered, in working toward Education for All. Part II presents the situation of basic education in each of the major regions of the world and cites specific examples of the actions taken to promote basic education. It also lists a number of policy concerns that are shared across the regions. Part III then proposes some lines of reflection for the Forum at its mid-decade meeting in Amman, Jordan, 16-19 June 1996, as it draws its own conclusions and recommends areas for priority attention.

The reader is invited to note that the expression "Education for All" and its abbreviation "EFA" are used in this report to refer to the policy orientation that aims at meeting the basic learning needs of people of all ages through the provision of basic education. The latter term encompasses a range of learning activities, from early childhood development (including preschool) programmes, through primary schooling, to life skills programmes and literacy courses for adolescents and adults, as well as educational activities that use modern and traditional media to reach a broad public. The term "teacher" is often used in a general sense to mean anyone who provides instruction or otherwise facilitates learning, whether in or out of school.

The report was prepared under the responsibility of the Secretariat of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All. It draws on an analysis prepared by Prof. Harbans S. Bhola of Indiana University and on comments made on the preliminary draft by readers at UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank. The report draws also on educational statistics collected by UNESCO, other data published by UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as data contained in reports submitted directly by governments during the Mid-Decade Review. A separate document (F3/2) prepared for the Forum meeting presents more complete statistics on basic education today by country and by region.

On behalf of the Forum Secretariat, I wish to express our appreciation for the many helpful contributions to the Mid-Decade Review and to this report. I also wish to record my personal gratitude to several colleagues who worked with me to complete this report, and in particular, Dieter Berstecher, Cynthia Gustman, Q.U. Khan, and Britt Sjöstedt.

Michael Lakin
Executive Secretary
International Consultative Forum on Education for All
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. A FIRST MEASURE OF PROGRESS

In response to widespread deterioration of education systems during the 1980s, the World Conference on Education for All — Meeting Basic Learning Needs, was held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. Reaffirming the right to education for people of all ages, the Conference adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and agreed on a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. The Declaration broadened the scope of basic education to include early childhood development, primary education, non-formal learning (including literacy and life skills) for youth and adults, and learning conveyed through the media and social action.

EFA IN A CHANGING WORLD

The context for educational development in the 1990s has been profoundly affected by changes in the world political and economic order following the end of the Cold War: the emergence of new democratic governments, the on-going globalization of the world economy, expansion of the service sector and rapid spread of new information and communications technologies — all of which call for new knowledge, skills and attitudes. At the same time, the population in the developing regions is growing rapidly, and the 6-11 age-group is expected to grow by some 19% over the 1990s, meaning an additional 103 million children needing a place in primary school.

Several major United Nations conferences during the 1990s have emphasized human development and underlined the pivotal role of education as a key to sustainable development and improved living standards.

THE EFA PROCESS IN COUNTRIES

The majority of developing nations have responded to the challenge of the Jomtien Conference by taking various actions to: evaluate their existing education systems; design policies to improve basic education; strengthen the capacities of people and institutions to manage education; create a more supportive policy environment; broaden partnerships and diversity the resource base; and explore ways to use traditional and modern channels of information and communication to provide basic education.

REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COOPERATION

The International Consultative Forum on Education for All, established to promote and monitor progress towards EFA, serves as the global focal point for information and dialogue. Several other networks have also strengthened cooperation and information sharing between bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, between agencies and countries, and among NGOs.

A survey in 1995 found that donor commitments and disbursements to basic education had risen in absolute and relative terms since 1990. Several bilateral donors have identified basic education as a priority area, and the World Bank and other multilateral agencies have increased their commitments to basic education substantially.

OVERALL PROGRESS TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL

Information collected during the Mid-Decade Review of Progress towards Education for All gives a general, though imperfect, picture of progress and problems since 1990 along the six target dimensions proposed in the Jomtien Framework for Action.

Early childhood development (ECD) is a fast-growing component of basic education, now reaching some 456 million children in the developing regions, i.e. about one out of five in the 3-6 age-group. Efforts are being made to target children at risk with programmes integrating education, health and nutrition components.
In spite of economic difficulties, primary education in most developing countries is growing, and the downward trends of the 1980s appear to have been largely reversed. Between 1990 and 1995, enrolments in all developing countries combined have grown by 50 million pupils, double the pace of growth in the 1980s. Net enrolment ratios (NER), the proportion of pupils enrolled who are in the official age-group, has risen in all developing regions. Nearly two out of three school-age children in Africa are enrolled, but civil strife has had a devastating effect on enrolments in some countries. NERs in the Latin America/Caribbean and East Asia/Pacific regions will surpass the 90 per cent mark before the year 2000.

According to recent estimates, some 110 million school-age children were out of school in 1995, a significant decrease from the 129 million in 1990 and the dismal projections made at that time. But in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of children without access to primary education is still growing.

Most developing countries still lack the capacity to monitor learning achievement in primary schools. Testing typically serves as a screening mechanism, rather than a vehicle for correcting shortcomings in teaching. Grade repetition and drop-out continue to be serious obstacles to universal primary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia, less than four out of five pupils reach Grade 4.

Despite the Jomtien Conference's call for urgent improvements in the conditions of service of teachers, their status and working conditions have reached "an intolerable low point", according to a survey released in 1996 by the International Labour Organization. Decreases in real wages have driven many teachers to leave the profession.

Despite slow improvements in girls' enrolments, they are still less likely than boys to be enrolled in school, and the gender gap in NERs actually grew worse in the 1990s except in the Arab States. However, many countries now have action plans to promote the education of girls and women, reflecting the growing awareness that this is an investment with high social and economic returns.

In 1995, developing countries counted an estimated 872 million illiterate youth and adults, age 15 and over, representing some four million more than in 1990. Only a minor decline in numbers is expected by 2000 unless there is a truly major effort to promote literacy and life skills education for adolescents and adults, and particularly women, who constitute nearly two-thirds of all illiterate adults, a proportion that has not changed since 1990.

The provision of basic education through the mass media has developed only modestly since the Jomtien Conference. The E-9 high-population countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan), who are home to to over 70 per cent of the world's illiterate adults, have identified the use of media for education as one of the main areas for their cooperation.

Available data do yet fully reflect shifts in resource allocations to basic education. Overall, however, the post-Jomtien years have seen a rise of educational expenditure as a percentage of GNP in all developing regions except South Asia. The least developed countries, however, fell further behind during this period: they devoted no more than 2.8 per cent of GNP to education in 1993.

II. ACTIONS AND RESULTS

Sub-Saharan Africa

While African countries have managed to increase primary school enrolments, the number of out-of-school children in the 6-11 age group grew by some 2 million since 1990, now totalling 39.3 million, two-thirds of whom are girls. Countries have also sought to improve learning achievement, for example, by making the curriculum more relevant and using local languages for instruction in the early years.

Out-of-school programmes have reached many under-served groups. Adult literacy rates reached 56.8 per cent in 1995, up from 40.2 per cent in 1980, but the gap between men's and women's literacy rates (19 percentage points) closed only slightly. Less than half of
African women are literate today and their literacy rates are below 25 per cent in a number of countries.

**ARAB STATES**

By 1995, the regional average NER reached 78.6 per cent for boys and 69.7 for girls, but some countries recorded declining NERs. Repetition rates appear to have decreased somewhat and the percentage of pupils reaching Grade 4 increased from 91 to 94 per cent, which may reflect countries' efforts to improve the quality of education.

However, adult illiteracy remains a serious problem in the Arab States, although literacy rates have continued to improve, reaching an estimated 68 per cent for men and 44 per cent for women. Further overall improvement can be expected as the number of out-of-school children in the 6-11 age-group decreased from 9.1 million in 1990 to 8.2 million in 1995, of whom 6.1 million are girls.

**ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Since 1990, there has been a general improvement in the regional NERS, currently at 87.4 per cent in South Asia and 64.5 in South Asia. There was a larger increase in the NER for boys than for girls in Asia as a whole, widening the gender gap in NERS to 10 percentage points in East Asia and to 20 percentage points in South Asia. As enrolments expanded faster than the growth of the 6-11 age-group, the out-of-school population decreased from 56.5 million to 33.2 million.

The challenge in this region is to find cost-effective ways of providing basic education to vast numbers. Some countries have introduced "home schools" and community schools staffed by para-professionals to reach more children.

Between 1990 and 1995, adult literacy rates rose from 80.3 per cent to 83.6 per cent in East Asia, and from 72.2 to 76.3 per cent in South Asia. Nevertheless, rapid population growth in South Asia continued to raise the absolute number of illiterates. The gender gap is also pronounced in literacy; women's literacy rates lag behind men's by some 14 percentage points in East Asia and by 26 percentage points in South Asia.

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

The average NER for the region rose to 88.5 per cent in 1995, with the NER for boys higher than that of girls, but girls tend to drop out less than boys. Adult literacy rates showed little difference between men (87.7%) and women (85.5%), although urban-rural disparities within countries were notable. Large-scale reform efforts are on-going in most countries in the region, usually addressing issues of quality, language of instruction and efficiency.

**EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA**

Despite primary school enrolment rates around 100%, some recent survey data show a worrisome emergence of functional illiteracy in many parts of the region. Low levels of learning achievement, semi-literate school-leavers, and new skills requirements have combined to generate new literacy problems in this region.

**COMMON CONCERNS ACROSS THE REGIONS**

The seven regional policy review seminars held as part of the Mid-Decade Review concurred on a number of issues of concern:

- a. the "expanded vision of basic education" needs to be applied both in policy and practice;
- b. more resources must be found for basic education;
- c. the recruitment, training and status of teachers must be improved;
- d. the quality of education must be improved to enhance learning achievement;
- e. assessment of learning achievement must be generalized;
- f. more emphasis is still needed on girls' and women's education;
- g. basic education must be made more available to children, youth and adults with special needs; and
- h. more attention needs to be given to develop adults' literacy and numeracy skills and on sustaining these skills.
III. IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

Progress since 1990 has been uneven and often below expectations, but progress is nevertheless being made. Rhetoric has not always been matched with action, and despite its currency, "Education for All" is often reduced to "schooling for all". Also, the important Jomtien concept of meeting basic learning needs has received much less attention than the effort to provide a school place for every child. Thus, the "expanded vision of basic education" has been followed selectively, and most resources still go into providing places in primary school, with far less attention to youth and adults. Furthermore, the gender gap in education is closing only slowly and is even widening in some regions. Overall, developing countries have shown greater interest than industrialized countries in EFA, although the latter also face some serious problems.

FOUR CHALLENGES

1. Improving learning achievement - Rich and poor countries alike are concerned about the quality of education offered in their schools and out-of-school programmes and the perceived inadequacies in learning achievement. Introducing even simple learning assessment methods, together with proven means to enhance the quality of instruction, are necessary and urgent to optimize returns on the investment in education and to meet basic learning needs effectively.

2. Resources and partnerships for EFA - Public funding for education is generally inadequate, and often poorly used, to expand access and improve quality. Building partnerships in support of basic education can mobilize more and varied material and other resources.

3. Building capacities to provide basic education - Putting in place the institutional arrangements and skilled professionals needed to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults over their lifetime calls for imaginative strategies beyond necessary school reform.

4. Meeting the basic learning needs of all - Disparities in educational provision and attainment are still widespread, affecting girls and women in the first instance, as well as various disadvantaged groups. The experience gained around the world in providing basic education more equitably needs to be applied more generally and urgently.
I. A FIRST MEASURE OF PROGRESS

JOMTIEN: REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT

For five days in March 1990, some 1,500 people representing 155 governments, 33 intergovernmental bodies and 125 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) gathered in Jomtien, Thailand, for the World Conference on Education for All — Meeting Basic Learning Needs. A key event of International Literacy Year, the conference was organized in response to widespread concern over the deterioration of education systems during the 1980s and the fact that millions of children and adults remain functionally illiterate and ill-prepared to participate in the mainstream of their societies.

The World Declaration on Education for All adopted at the Conference reaffirmed the international community’s commitment to ensuring the right to education for all people. It also effectively broadened the scope of basic education to include early childhood development, primary education, non-formal learning (including literacy) for youth and adults, and learning conveyed through the media and social action.

Convened by the executive heads of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, the Conference was hosted by the Royal Government of Thailand. Eighteen governments and organizations co-sponsored the initiative.

Article 1 of the Declaration set out the purpose of Education for All and defined the scope of basic learning needs (see box).

Participants at the Conference also agreed on a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. This document continues to serve as a reference for countries and organizations in their efforts to put the Declaration’s principles into effect.

EFA IN A CHANGING WORLD

National efforts to move towards Education for All have invariably had to cope with complex and profound changes in the world political and economic order over the past five years. The collapse of the Soviet bloc effectively ended the Cold War and put a number of newly independent nations on the map. It nourished the hope, largely unfulfilled, that cuts in military expenditure might be reinvested in education, health and jobs. It also had far-reaching consequences for those countries that were in its sphere of influence. As alliances forged during the Cold War broke down, many countries were faced with political fragmentation and severe economic recession.

MEETING THE BASIC LEARNING NEEDS OF ALL

Every person — child, youth and adult — shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.

These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time.

World Declaration on Education for All, Article 1.
The on-going globalization of the world economy affects many spheres of activity and has heightened both international cooperation and interdependence. Transfers of capital and technology are breaking through the traditional North-South paradigm. Services now dominate the world economy, calling for new knowledge and skills. In South Asia, the emergence of several newly industrializing countries is redrawing the economic map. But there is also a growing recognition that development founded on economic growth alone is inequitable and vulnerable. Over 75 per cent of the world's population live in the developing countries, but benefit from only 16 per cent of the world's wealth. More than one billion people today live in abject poverty, and real incomes have been declining in many developing countries. According to UNDP's Human Development Report 1995, the external debt of developing countries amounted to more than US$1.8 trillion in 1993, and debt service consumed 22 per cent of export earnings. Despite efforts to protect essential social services, structural adjustment policies in developing countries have often led to cuts in the number of personnel in education and health.

Chronic poverty, unemployment and social exclusion are not only widening disparities between North and South, but also weakening the social fabric within countries. Few countries today are shielded from social conflict within their own borders. One of the most disturbing phenomena of the post-Cold War era is the alarming revival of ethnic conflicts, in which more than 90 per cent of casualties are civilian. The Cold War had perhaps for a long time masked latent tensions between nations, ethnic groups and religious communities, according to the report for the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, headed by Jacques Delors, and these are now emerging to create countless areas of unrest or causes of overt conflict.

Armed conflict is currently taking place in over forty countries and has contributed to the sharp rise in the number of displaced persons. Between 1970 and 1994, the number of refugees has multiplied nine-fold, from three million to 27 million.

Yet, during the 1990s, democracy has advanced inexorably around the world. In 1993 alone, elections were held in 43 countries, in some for the first time. More than half of the African countries are undertaking democratic reforms, while the dismantling of apartheid and the emergence of an independent South Africa stand out as a turning point for the continent.

The growing number of NGOs and the variety of their activities are signs of an increasingly vibrant civil society determined to tackle a wide spectrum of issues. Some NGOs have taken on important advocacy roles in such fields as gender, human rights, the environment and education. Others have concentrated on projects to empower the poor, improve their living standards and promote participation. In education, NGOs have been particularly instrumental in experimenting with alternative, community-based approaches to reach disadvantaged children and adults.

The on-going revolution in information and communications opens tremendous opportunities for expanding learning opportunities, sharing scientific and technical knowledge and providing access to information. At the same time, this revolution brings fears of cultural homogenization, loss of national identities, and marginalization of those without access to modern technologies. The Delors Commission felt that "the emergence of information societies is a challenge to both democracy and education". Education systems must "give everyone the means of displaying a critical spirit coming to grips with the proliferation of information, that is, of sorting and ordering information".

These several trends are taking place against the backdrop of rapid world population growth. From 5.57 billion in 1993, world population is expected to total 6.25 billion in the year 2000 and may reach the 10 billion mark by 2050. Ninety per cent of this increase is concentrated in developing countries. Growth rates vary widely: 1.4 per cent in East Asia, 1.9 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2.2 per cent in South Asia, 2.6 per cent in the
THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION HELPS TO LESSEN THE BURDEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>THE ACTIVE POPULATION (15-64 AGE GROUP IN MILLIONS) HAS GROWN</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>...WHEREAS THE YOUTH DEPENDENCY RATIO (6-14 AGE GROUP AS % OF 15-65) IS FALLING IN MOST REGIONS</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>46.6</td>
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<td>Arab States</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
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<td>294</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia/Pacific</td>
<td></td>
<td>837</td>
<td>1176</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Which: China</td>
<td></td>
<td>597</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td></td>
<td>532</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Which: India</td>
<td></td>
<td>395</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Developing Countries</td>
<td></td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>2730</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Arab States, and over 3 per cent in most parts of Africa.

At the same time, child mortality and fertility rates have declined in many developing countries. The role of women's rising educational levels cannot be understated: a wealth of empirical evidence underscores the positive impact of girls' and women's education on delaying the age of marriage, reducing fertility and child mortality, and improving economic productivity.

As a result of declining fertility rates, the primary-school-age population is growing at a slower pace than the rest of the population in several regions. In some of the world's largest countries, the trend towards fewer children is unmistakable. In India, for example, total population will increase by 2.2 per cent annually this decade, but the number of children requiring a place in school will grow by only 1.6 per cent per annum. In all regions except sub-Saharan Africa, the youth-dependency ratio (6-14 age group as a percentage of the 15-65 "active population") has declined in the past decade.

EDUCATION: A KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

Rising social and economic insecurity and concerns about the depletion of non-renewable resources have led to a fundamental re-examination of the very concept of development against a much broader backdrop than economic growth alone. A more integrated concept of human development is emerging that stresses human welfare, poverty alleviation, participation and empowerment. This broader view of development, stressing investing in people, has been the focus of the recent series of United Nations conferences. Each conference adopted a declaration or convention, as well as a programme of action with implications and orientations running well into the 21st century. Each conference underlined the pivotal role of education as a key to sustainable development, improved living standards, peace and the exercise of fundamental human rights.
The 1990 World Summit for Children (New York), the first of the major summit meetings on development issues in the 1990s, set goals for reducing mortality, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy among children. The specific goals for 2000, endorsed by over 150 presidents and prime ministers, call *inter alia* for the provision of "basic education for all children and completion of primary education by at least 80%". This summit followed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations, in 1989, which made free and compulsory primary education an obligation of the state and reaffirmed it as a right of all children. Since then, more than 180 countries have ratified the Convention.

The links between education and sustainable development were underlined at the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro): "Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns". The conference urged governments to implement the Jomtien Framework for Action and adopt a broad approach to education that includes environmental concerns. This "Earth Summit" also stressed that governments should "affirm the rights of indigenous peoples, by legislation if necessary, to use their experience and understanding of sustainable development to play a part in education and training".

Reaffirming the right to development as a "universal and inalienable right", the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna) stressed that extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity: "The lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally recognized human rights". It urged that states "strive to eradicate illiteracy" and "include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings". The conference noted that human rights education and public information were essential for promoting harmonious relations among communities and fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.

While the rights of girls and women were enshrined in the Vienna Declaration, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) affirmed that for women to become agents of change, equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications were indispensable. The reduction of fertility, morbidity and mortality rates, the empowerment of women, the improvement in the quality of the working population and the promotion of genuine democracy are largely assisted by progress in education. Adopting a holistic approach to population issues, the Cairo conference called upon countries "to achieve universal access to quality education, with particular priority being given to primary and technical education and job training". Because promoting positive attitudes and more responsible behaviour starts at a young age, the conference urged that population issues be integrated into curricula at all levels of formal and non-formal education.

The links between education, empowerment and development were highlighted at the 1995 World Social Summit (Copenhagen), where for the first time, leaders from over 100 countries discussed the issues of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. Pledging to make the fight against these scourges their overriding objective, the leaders recognized the provision of equal educational opportunity to all groups as a top priority. They agreed that it is the duty of education authorities to improve the quality of education to ensure that people of all ages are provided with useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills and ethical and social values required to develop their full capacities and to participate fully in the social, economic and political process of development. The summit called for stronger links between labour market and education policies and pledged to "formulate and strengthen time-bound national strategies for the eradication of illiteracy and the universalization of basic education".
Education's central role in achieving the goals of equality, development and peace was reasserted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing). The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that "investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic returns, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth". It urged governments to increase girls' enrollment and retention rates by allocating appropriate budgetary resources, enlisting the support of parents and the community, and minimizing the cost of sending girls to school through more flexible schedules, incentives, scholarships and other means. UNICEF's Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, stated clearly that "governments of both developing and donor countries can restructure their budgets to mobilize the amount of money it will take to achieve basic education for all worldwide".

Seen along a continuum, these several conferences have furthered understanding of the interplay between environmental protection, economic growth, social integration, women's empowerment and demographic factors in development. They also reiterated the necessary links between development, human rights and the practice of democracy, all vital to the safeguarding of peace. Education's pivotal role in all these domains was strongly reaffirmed by the conferences. This has contributed to a global consensus that Education for All is an essential key to the development of society.

The Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs agreed upon at Jomtien emphasizes that change and progress ultimately depend on the actions taken within individual countries. Stressing that basic education is the responsibility of the entire society, it calls upon the active involvement of government authorities and a wide range of partners — families, teachers, communities, private enterprises, non-governmental organizations, etc. — in planning, managing and evaluating the many forms of basic education. Country reports compiled for the Mid-Decade Review of Progress towards Education for All show that a large majority of developing nations are responding to the challenge. Action taken by developing countries in line with the Jomtien Framework for Action to mobilize and plan for EFA is summarized in the following table.

This level of activity, despite economic constraints and the inertia of education systems, shows that the vision of Education for All has taken root in the policies and practices of many countries. In Part II of this report, more detailed discussion of measures taken, the problems encountered and the gains accomplished will show to what extent this mobilization and planning over the past six years have borne concrete fruits.

### THE EFA PROCESS IN COUNTRIES

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### MOBILIZATION AND PLANNING FOR EFA SINCE JOMTIEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>NATIONAL POLICY MEETINGS HELD</th>
<th>EFA INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS CONDUCTED</th>
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<th>MEETING WITH DONORS</th>
<th>MDR REPORTS DRAWN UP</th>
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</table>

Source: Mid Decade Review Country Reports, 1996.
REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Since 1990, the constituencies supporting basic education have expanded and become more active on regional and international levels. The International Consultative Forum on Education for All was established after the Jomtien Conference to promote and monitor progress towards EFA, and serves as the global focal point for information and dialogue. Its work has been complemented and supported by several collaborative networks and political initiatives that cross national boundaries.

The International Working Group on Education, which is an informal forum for officials of development agencies, has been active in fostering dialogue and cooperation between bilateral and multilateral agencies. Several regional networks and programmes for intercountry cooperation in basic education have also helped follow up the Jomtien Conference: the Asia and Pacific Programme on Education for All (APPEAL), the Major Programme for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Regional Programme for the Universalisation of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL).

However, it is in Africa that initiatives to forge new partnerships and promote collaboration have been particularly active. The Association for the Development of African Education (DAE, formerly called Donors to African Education) promotes a sustained dialogue between African education ministers and senior officials of multilateral and bilateral funding agencies on critical education issues in Africa. Since 1993, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has gathered leading women decision-makers and education specialists around an agenda of public advocacy, research and pilot programmes aimed at overcoming the deep-rooted gender disparities observed in many African education systems.

In 1995, a group of African education ministers adopted the "Segou Declaration" which led the Organization of African Unity to launch the "Education Decade for Africa" and to declare 1996 "Education in Africa Year". In early 1996, the UN Secretary General announced the "UN Secretary-General's Special Initiative for Africa", in which basic education holds a prominent place.

NGOs have also been active partners in the worldwide movement to reduce illiteracy and expand access to basic education. Over the past six years, NGOs have set up several regional and international networks for cooperation and information exchange. In September 1995, three groups of NGOs concerned with Education for All gathered in Tokyo to review progress since Jomtien from their perspectives. They called for more openness in partnerships among NGOs and in their relationship with governments, and for the establishment of a global literacy observatory to monitor progress.

With its broad international membership, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Development has been an effective catalyst in launching innovative initiatives in various developing countries. ECD programmes are important in preparing children for further learning. The ECD programmes supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and others aim to educate and involve parents and work closely with communities. Such programmes are often twinned with adult education, literacy and population programmes. Donor support for ECD programmes initiated by governments and the private sector has risen in the 1990s.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR BASIC EDUCATION

Following the Jomtien Conference, several donors have reoriented their policies to give priority to basic education. A survey conducted by UNESCO in 1995 found that aggregate donor commitments and disbursements for basic education have risen in absolute and relative terms.

While Sweden can be singled out as a steady supporter of basic education for nearly three decades, other donors have become more active in promoting EFA after
reviewing their aid policies in light of the Jomtien Conference recommendations. Some bilateral donors have markedly increased support to this sector; in Germany for example, disbursements to basic education rose six-fold between 1992 and 1994, representing an increase in its proportion of aid to education from 6.5 per cent to 38 per cent. The European Union, grouping 15 member states, has formally identified basic education as a priority in its cooperation programme. It should be noted, however, that a few donor countries have not joined the international consensus in support of basic education, arguing that other levels and types of education also require support.

Drawing attention to the high returns on investment in basic education, the World Bank has taken the lead in honouring its commitments at the Jomtien Conference by increasing its lending for education from US$1.5 billion to US$2.1 billion between 1990 and 1994. The share going to basic education increased from 24 per cent in fiscal year 1990 to 50 per cent in fiscal year 1993.

Other multilateral organizations are also committed to increasing their assistance to basic education. Although commitments have sometimes been slow to translate into actual figures, the shift is now apparent. Between 1993 and 1994-1995, UNESCO increased the weight of basic education in its education programme from 26 per cent to 47 per cent. UNICEF’s medium-term target is to boost spending on basic education to 25 per cent of its regular resources from the current level of 10 per cent. UNFPA increased basic education’s share of total educational assistance from 28 per cent in 1990 to 38 per cent in 1993.

Although most donor support has gone to primary schooling, some donors are diversifying their support to cover other kinds of basic education, such as literacy programmes, adult education, special needs education and early childhood development. External funding tends to be used for teacher training, curriculum development, production of educational materials, and construction and repair of school buildings.

Several donors have also considered supporting initiatives in distance education. Moreover, emphasis across the board is being placed on basic education programmes and projects that specifically target girls and women. However, not all developing countries give priority to basic education when negotiating external assistance. Donors, therefore, have to balance their own priorities and advocacy favouring basic education against the needs expressed by their partner countries.

In light of the overall decline in total resources for development aid and of the emergence of new issues calling for support, it is important that basic education be viewed as a key ingredient of all development assistance rather than as just one area among many.

**OVERALL PROGRESS TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL**

The Jomtien Framework for Action called upon countries to pursue educational policies in line with the World Declaration on Education for All and geared to specific targets suited to the national context (see box next page).

A serious lack of timely and reliable data makes it difficult to establish a global balance sheet of progress towards the main Jomtien goals during the first half of the 1990s. The picture which follows is based largely on a few main quantitative indicators that focus on primary schooling over the less visible and measurable dimensions of non-formal education, such as literacy and life skills education for youth and adults, as well as basic education conveyed by the media. The picture is also incomplete as regards key aspects of educational quality and actual learning achievement. These essential shades and nuances need to be taken into account when examining the specific issues and trends that have been identified in the different regions, as reported in Part II of this report.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: A SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION**

Early childhood development (ECD) is a fast-growing component of basic education, although considerable variations prevail between countries. Since 1990, reported enrolments in ECD programmes in developing countries have grown by some 20 per cent, now
**SIX EFA TARGET DIMENSIONS**

The Jomtien Framework for Action invites countries to set their own targets for the 1990s in terms of the following dimensions:

1. **Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities**, including family and community interventions, especially for the poor, disadvantaged and disabled children;

2. **Universal access to, and completion of, primary education** (or whatever higher level of education is considered as "basic") by the year 2000;

3. **Improvement in learning achievement** such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e.g., 80 per cent of 14 year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement;

4. **Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate** (the appropriate age group to be determined in each country) to, say, one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between male and female illiteracy rates;

5. **Expansion of provisions of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults**, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity;

6. **Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development**, made available through all education channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change.


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reaching 56 million young children. This represents about one out of five children in the 3-6 age-group, and girls make up nearly half of the enrolment. The number of pre-primary institutions expanded by some 30 per cent since 1990, and the number of caregivers employed in this field increased by 12 per cent to 2.1 million.

Government resources for pre-primary programmes now represent an estimated 4 per cent of national education budgets. Besides this quantitative expansion, new qualitative trends in ECD are evident since 1990. There have been efforts to broaden the outreach and focus of pre-school programmes, which have tended to cater to children from the more privileged families in urban areas. ECD programmes increasingly go beyond the notion of simply preparing children for primary school, with more emphasis being given to provide a range of community-based services to young children in line with their basic needs. More attention is also being given to children at risk, who are reached more effectively through integrated programmes combining education, health and nutrition components. These are generally managed at the local level and rely on the active involvement of parents, communities, NGOs and other partners.

Alongside a significant growth in professional associations, there have been new approaches to train "early childhood care-givers". One example is the Joint Training Initiative, promoted by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF and Save the Children, involving six African countries.

**PRIMARY EDUCATION: RETURN TO GROWTH**

In 80 per cent of the developing countries, primary enrolments have been growing since 1990: this is perhaps the single most positive and significant feature of the mid-decade balance sheet. In spite of economic hardship, many countries affected by serious enrolment declines during the 1980s appear to have overcome the setbacks and reversed the downward trend. These include some of the larger countries in the developing regions: for example, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zaire in Africa; Morocco in the Arab States; China in East Asia; Colombia, Cuba and Mexico in Latin America.
Between 1990 and 1995, enrolments in all developing countries together grew by 50 million students, at double the pace observed in the 1980s. A closer look shows that South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are the two regions that enrolled the most additional pupils since 1990: a combined total of some 33 million.

Many countries affected by serious enrolment declines during the 1980s appear to have overcome the setbacks. A more precise measure of progress towards universal primary education is the net enrolment ratio (NER), i.e. the proportion of the official primary school-age group actually attending school. This critical indicator has risen in all developing regions. At the two extremes, sub-Saharan Africa’s aggregate NER is now around 60 per cent, while the Latin America/Caribbean and East Asia/Oceania regions will clearly surpass the 90 per cent mark before the year 2000.

A darker note, however, concerns the devastating effects of civil strife and its aftermath on children’s access to basic education in several African countries. In Rwanda alone, more than 60 per cent of the teachers were killed or fled the country. Educational programmes in such circumstances have a critical role to play in breaking down barriers and prejudice, and providing a sense of normalcy and stability.

Reaching the Excluded Children

At the time of the 1990 Jomtien Conference, an estimated 128 million school-age children had no access to schooling, and some 90 million of these children were girls. Based on enrolment and population trends at that time, the number of out-of-school children was expected to grow to some 148 million by the year 2000. However, the latest enrolment data reported by countries now permits a more optimistic assessment. The number of out-of-school children in the 6-11 age-group in all developing regions combined is estimated at some 110 million in 1995 and should decline further by the year 2000.

The most significant progress in reducing the number of out-of-school children was made in East Asia/Pacific and South Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where the number of out-of-school children continues to grow. Most of these "forgotten children" live in remote rural areas or in urban slums.

Retention and Learning Achievement

Drop-out continues to be a major problem in all developing regions, especially sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia, where less than four-fifths of all children who start Grade 1 reach Grade 4. In some countries in Africa, the Arab States and South Asia, more girls drop out than boys, which further affects the disparity between girls’ and boys’ educational opportunity and achievement.

Drop-out continues to be a major problem in all developing regions.

Countless studies have analyzed the causes of drop-out, such as health problems, absenteeism, child labour, high opportunity costs and teen-age pregnancies, among others. But in many school systems, the underlying reason — even at the primary level — is that the school promotes the “fittest” pupils and screens out those with special learning needs. Of course this practice runs counter to the spirit of education for All and involves significant personal, social and financial costs.
## PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS REACHING GRADE 4 (1987 and 1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1987</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>72.95</td>
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<td>Arab States</td>
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<td>Latin America/Caribbean</td>
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<td>East Asia/Pacific</td>
<td>82.13</td>
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<td>South Asia</td>
<td>69.56</td>
<td>77.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Countries</td>
<td>77.85</td>
<td>82.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Grade repetition is a major factor leading children to quit school because it carries the stigma of failure. Repetition rates tend to be highest in the initial and final grades of primary school. In sub-Saharan Africa, repetition rates of 20 per cent are common and have not really changed for the better since 1990. While patterns of repetition are slowly improving in the Arab States and Latin America, the problem has actually worsened in Asia.

### Most Developing Countries Still Lack the Capacity to Monitor the Quality of Learning in Primary Schools

The World Declaration on Education for All addressed the problem of learning achievement in these terms: "whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development — for an individual or for society — depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of those opportunities, i.e. whether they incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and values". The Declaration then called on countries to "define acceptable levels of learning acquisition... and improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement" (Article 4).

Most developing countries still lack the capacity to monitor the quality of learning in primary schools. Where tests are given, they generally serve to select pupils for the next grade or level, rather than to detect and correct shortcomings in teaching strategies.

Therefore, building institutional capacities in this vital area and training national specialists has been an important preoccupation of countries and external agencies since Jomtien. The World Bank and other donors have assisted a number of countries in strengthening the institutions responsible for examinations and assessment. The monitoring of learning outcomes can also be used as a means of correcting inequalities amongst schools.

UNESCO and UNICEF are working with some 20 developing countries to design and introduce classroom assessment of learning achievement in Grade 4 of their primary schools. Rather than replicating internationally comparable achievement measures, the project aims to build local capacities. This entails integrating testing and survey design into national institutions and training a critical mass of people at national and sub-national levels.

In line with the Jomtien definition of basic learning needs, many efforts to assess learning outcomes no longer focus exclusively on reading, writing and numeracy. Increasingly, they also encompass "life skills", i.e. learners’ ability to know about and cope with basic concerns they face in their daily lives, such as preventing disease, reproductive health, protecting the environment and exercising their civil rights.

### Teachers: The Critical Link

Although the Jomtien Declaration called for urgent improvement in the terms and conditions of teachers’ service and status, the situation of many teachers in developing countries has reached "an intolerably low point" according to a recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO). In some countries of sub-Saharan Africa, teachers work in dilapidated classrooms with more than 100 pupils and barely any teaching materials.

Many teachers have suffered serious decreases in real wages. In the Central African Republic, Kenya and Madagascar, for example, teachers’ purchasing power dropped by more than 30 per cent in the last decade. According to a report by Education...
International, "the vast majority of teachers believe that they do not receive the moral and material recognition appropriate to their level of qualifications and responsibilities" (see box).

Low salaries and late payment undermine morale and status. Too often, teachers have to carry out their duties without sufficient education, pedagogical training or support. Consequently, many teachers have to take on additional jobs or leave the profession. This turnover in the teaching profession is detrimental to schooling and makes the profession unattractive at a time when the need for recruiting, training and retraining good teachers should be a top priority.

According to an estimate made in 1993, some 4 million additional primary teachers would be needed between 1990 and 2000 to achieve universal primary education. Data for 1995 indicate that in all developing countries combined, some 1.36 million of these additional teachers have actually joined the profession. However, substantially increasing the number of teachers will be no easy task: teachers' salaries already constitute up to 90 per cent of recurrent education budgets in most developing countries.

The share of female primary teachers has progressed everywhere since 1990 and has crossed the 50 per cent mark for the developing world as a whole (51.9 per cent in 1995). In Latin America and the Caribbean, women constitute 75 per cent of the teachers. Given the positive relationship between female teachers and girls' enrolment and learning achievement, this trend is particularly encouraging.

Education for All is increasingly seen as a key to breaking out of the cycle of illiteracy, poverty, marginalization and rapid population growth.

Educating girls and women is increasingly seen as a key to breaking out of the cycle of illiteracy, poverty, marginalization and rapid population growth.

Since the United Nations Decade for Women, countries have multiplied initiatives to enhance women's participa-
tion in social, economic and political spheres. Partly thanks to strong advocacy movements, the issue of girls' education is being addressed with some degree of boldness throughout the world. Many countries have action plans that give priority to girls' and women's education, reflecting the growing awareness that gender inequality is a matter affecting society as a whole, with implications for overall development. Although a complex web of economic, cultural and social factors impede girls' education, there is now enough experience available worldwide to know that there are proven strategies and means to attract and keep girls in school. Governments are acting on a number of them. They include, for example, reducing the cost of schooling for families, bringing schools closer to the community, increasing the number of female teachers, adopting more flexible schedules, and making curricula more attuned to the lives of girls and women. In supporting governments' efforts to reform education, donors tend to look for strategies that will improve the quality of girls' education, especially through teacher training, book development and curriculum revision.

However, few countries reported any initiatives involving gender training for teachers, who are often powerful role models for school children. Teachers without a sensitivity to the ways in which girls and boys are socialized often unconsciously reinforce stereotypes and discourage girls from taking or exceeding in certain subjects such as math and science, which are perceived as "male" subjects. Developing "an equal opportunity curriculum" involves making science more relevant to girls, by relating it more closely to the local environment, and using textbooks that project a more positive picture of girls and women.

How have these commitments and strategies influenced enrolments? Generally, girls' enrolments have increased throughout the world, but progress towards gender equity has been slow. Girls' share in primary enrolments in the developing regions advanced very slightly to reach an average of 45.8 per cent in 1995, against 45.4 per cent five years earlier.

As seen above, more than half of all primary school teachers in the developing world are women, but the proportion of women teachers is significantly lower in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, standing at 39 and 37 per cent respectively. It is precisely in these two regions that the challenge to increase girls' school attendance is also most pronounced. Once enrolled, do girls or boys "survive" longer in school? The available data cover only about half of the developing countries, and the evidence is somewhat mixed. Generally, about the same percentage of boys and girls reach Grade 4 except in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the survival rate of girls (average of 14 countries) exceeds that of boys by almost 7 percentage points. Several Caribbean countries have expressed concern over problems of school performance which affects boys disproportionately more than girls.
Literacy for Youth and Adults

An underlying aim of Education for All is to eliminate illiteracy, but the yardstick to monitor progress is crude. Literacy data are generally collected during national censuses, which tend to rely on self-reporting, use narrow definitions and are often carried out by poorly trained census personnel. In the last few years, household surveys in some countries have shed a clearer light on degrees of literacy and on modes of literacy acquisition. However, the global database for literacy statistics is still weak, so this should be borne in mind in the following discussion.

In 1995, the world counted an estimated 885 million illiterate youth and adults aged 15 and over, about the same number as in 1990. A slight decline is expected by 2000, to 881 million.

Essentially, Asia is the stage on which the main battle for universal literacy is being fought. The significant gains made in East Asia over the past five years contrast sharply with the growing number of illiterates in South Asia. Over the same period, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States have increased the world’s illiterate population by six million, of which 80 per cent are women.

Eight out of ten men in the developing world have acquired literacy, essentially through schooling. But the cycle of illiteracy and poverty begins in the early years, with girls not attending school or dropping out before they acquire lasting literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, the overall literacy rate for women in developing countries barely exceeded 60 per cent in 1995. The gender gap in literacy has actually widened since 1990.

Clearly, any significant reduction of illiteracy requires programmes that target women: the most successful experiences in this field are those set up out of need and directly linked to income-generating activities. Based on an “empowerment approach”, these programmes call into question entrenched roles and seek to impart problem-solving skills and knowledge leading to greater self-reliance, confidence and awareness.

Basic Education and the Media

The use of media for educational purposes has lived up only modestly to the challenges set forth in the Jomtien Declaration. While several countries have explored using the media as an alternative routes to learning, this kind of investment continues to be marginal or even absent in most.

Nine high-population countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan) have made considerable progress in this regard. Because they jointly comprise half the world’s population and close to three-quarters of its illiterates, any successful initiative in these countries is significant. In Brazil, for example, Telecurso 2000 offers general primary-level education in combination with training in job-related skills to learners who are unable to attend school because of employment. Indonesia offers free junior secondary
education to financially disadvantaged youths who study self-instructional modules in the afternoon as part of the SMP Terbuka programme. Cost is a fraction of a place in school. Egypt is making important inroads in using technology to improve both access to and the quality of education.

*The success of media-assisted education does not lie in the tools as such, but in how they are used.* Educational television in countries like Brazil, China and Mexico, among others, merits attention. While television is not necessarily more effective than radio in a teaching/learning context, its cost is definitely higher and varies according to how the medium is used. A country's cultural context should also influence the choice of medium. In Brazil for example, television is the privileged medium for reaching the largest numbers, especially the underprivileged, given its predominant role in popular culture.

The so-called new media, based on digital compression and transmission techniques, the mass storage of information (e.g., CD-ROM and interactive CD), satellite broadcasting, use of fibre optic networks and computer-mediated communication, all hold a potential that many developing countries, including Mexico, India, Morocco and South Africa, are eager to explore. These new communication technologies offer unprecedented possibilities for interactive and flexible learning that the traditional classroom situation does not allow.

*Resources for Education*

Although efforts to broaden the resource base of education since the Jomtien Conference have often succeeded in mobilizing private sector funds and recovering costs from local communities and parents, they have first and foremost put a heavy additional burden on national government budgets.

Data on public expenditure on education do not yet fully reflect shifts in public resource allocations over the last five years. Paradoxically, the available data suggest that in many developing countries, high levels of educational expenditure seem to go hand in hand with low levels of educational coverage. In 1995, net enrolment ratios in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States...
were respectively 60 and 75 per cent. At the same time, these regions spent higher shares of GNP (5.7 and 5.8 per cent respectively) on education than other developing regions that have come much closer to achieving universal primary education. These indicators raise serious questions about relative cost-effectiveness in the allocation of educational resources and the basic cost structures inherent in the formal education systems of many developing countries. If, as the example of East Asia suggests, it is possible to achieve high enrolment rates with lesser investments, a detailed comparative analysis of public education budgets in different developing countries should become a priority undertaking.

It should be borne in mind that educational expenditure data relate to education systems as a whole, including the costly investments in general secondary, vocational and higher education. As the Jomtien Declaration and Framework for Action underlined, substantial savings may be derived from re-examining spending patterns and unit costs at the different levels of the education system.

Overall, the immediate post-Jomtien years have seen a rise of educational expenditure as a percentage of GNP in all developing regions except South Asia. The least developed countries, however, fell further behind during this period: as a group, they devoted only 2.8 per cent of GNP to education in 1993, but their net enrolment ratios improved more than the average for all developing countries.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION AS PER CENT OF GNP: 1990-1993

<table>
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<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
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<th>1993</th>
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<tr>
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<td>LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES</td>
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Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1995
II. ACTIONS AND RESULTS

During the seven policy review seminars held in the developing regions, the findings of the country-level mid-decade reviews were analyzed. The seminars took stock of countries' accomplishments, problems encountered and prospects for moving towards their EFA goals. The following pages present the general features and common concerns identified for each major region of the world. A number of country examples are cited to illustrate the unavoidable generalizations, which tend to obscure interesting differences between and even within countries.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

During the 1990s, the general context for the development of African societies and their education systems has been difficult. Drought, famine, internal conflicts, political instability and unfavourable terms of trade slowed economic growth to less than 2 per cent for the region as a whole - while population grew at an average rate of over 3 per cent. The region's external debt by mid-decade stood at an estimated US$130 billion, representing 114 per cent of its aggregate GNP. Economic austerity measures, including the downsizing of public services, are perceived to have contributed to widespread unemployment, even among the educated, affecting particularly the young population. Altogether, these several factors exacerbated economic hardship and increased the number of people living below the poverty line, now estimated at well over half the total population.

Yet, certain effects of the forces at work may contribute to educational development. Urbanization, despite its frequent negative features, enables ever larger numbers of people to access the information media and public services, including schooling. Social changes in customs, traditional family structures and the status of women may lead to a growing demand for education, especially for girls and women. The difficult political transition from authoritarian regimes toward pluralistic democracies along with the shift toward market economies have opened new possibilities for social action and economic development, which will influence the demand for and supply of education. Also, African leaders are determined to take charge of the development their countries in line with popular aspirations and to seek endogenous solutions, rather than to rely on external assistance and models.

Given this problematic and evolving context, it is not surprising that educational indicators for sub-Saharan Africa during the first half of the 1990s lead to the conclusion that basic education is NOT progressing at a pace that will enable most countries to attain more than modest EFA targets by the end of the decade.

Between 1990 and 1995, the total primary school enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa expanded by some 10.4 million, an increase of 17 per cent in five years, reaching 72.3 million pupils in 1995. The number of teachers increased, too, but by only 12 per cent. Consequently, the pupil/teacher ratio rose slightly to a regional average of 45.4 pupils per teacher, although it actually decreased in 17 countries but rose dramatically in seven others (Benin, Central African Republic, Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali United Republic of Tanzania).

The region's net enrolment ratio (NER), which measures the percentage of the official school-age population actually enrolled in school, improved by 2.3 percentage points during the five years, reaching 65.7 per cent for boys and 56.1 per cent for girls in 1995.

1 The North African countries are treated as part of the Arab States region.
Despite this overall improvement and the generally avowed priority to improve the education of girls, the NER for girls actually decreased in some 18 countries, while it decreased for boys in 13 countries. Consequently, the gap between the regional average NER for boys and girls widened by 1.5 percentage points over the five years. Although a growing proportion of African children are now enrolled in school, the number of children in the 6 to 11 age group still unenrolled grew by some 2 million since 1990, totalling 39.3 million — and two-thirds of them are girls. This age group, which corresponds more or less to the primary school age group in most countries, grew in Africa at an annual rate of 3.41 per cent between 1990 and 1995, the fastest growth of any developing region. By comparison, the 6-11 population in South Asia grew by 1.61 per cent per annum during the same period.

Reliable and comparable data on the learning achievement of children in school are unavailable, but two indicators suggest that learning — and the efficiency of schools — probably have not improved noticeably since 1990. The proportion of repeaters in the total primary enrolment appears to remain at about 20 per cent, by far the highest proportion of any developing region. Also, an analysis of the 1987 and 1993 pupil cohorts in African countries to determine what proportion reached Grade 4 shows only a slight overall improvement, from 72.95 per cent to 75.13 per cent. A separate analysis using data from 27 African countries shows there is virtually no difference between boys' and girls' "survival" to Grade 4.

Adult literacy rates in Africa have risen significantly, from 40.2 per cent in 1980 to 56.8 per cent in 1995, but the large gap between literacy rates for men and women closed by only 3.3 percentage points in that period. Today, less than half (47.3%) of adult women are considered literate, compared to two-thirds (66.6%) of adult men. Women's literacy rates are still at or below 25 per cent in a dozen African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone). These several indicators sketch a very rough picture of basic education in the region, but how have countries attempted to improve their situation during the 1990s? Most African mid-decade review reports state that the Jomtien Conference provided both a stimulus and guidelines for renewed efforts to expand primary schooling and to meet the basic learning needs of adolescents and adults, as well. A few of the principal lines of action are outlined below.

Most African countries reported organizing a national policy meeting on Education for All in the early 1990s, and several countries adopted EFA policies and plans, including Kenya, Madagascar and Zambia. Mauritius, one of the first, developed a master plan for the development of its education sector, based on a broad national consensus; subsequently, the plan received strong support from multilateral and bilateral funding agencies. Another example is Mozambique, which developed a master plan for basic education as part of its reconstruction efforts.

Many countries, such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, have adopted measures to give more responsibility to local communities for basic education. Burkina Faso, for example, introduced satellite schools and non-formal basic education centres to expand access in rural areas (see box). Chad decentralized much of its educational administration in the early 1990s, and some 20 per cent of educational expenditures are financed from an assessment on parents. Through community participation and cost sharing with parents, Tanzania increased the number of pre-schools from 914 in 1990 to 2058 in 1995. Sometimes non-governmental organizations have been active partners with the government, as in Mali, where Save the Children/USA helped to set up village schools.

Alongside efforts to expand access to education, many countries (e.g. Gambia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, etc.) have introduced measures to improve educational quality and learning achievement. Gambia, for example, is renewing the content of its curriculum. A group of countries using Portuguese as a medium of instruction...
are working together on using radio as a learning support in language and math. Malawi, among others, is working to boost teacher training, and Guinea has sought to improve teaching in rural areas through the redeployment of skilled teachers from urban areas.

Instruction in the mother tongue in the early years of schooling, in non-formal education programmes and in adult literacy courses, is another line of action that several countries, such as Benin, Mozambique, and Senegal, have introduced to make basic education more accessible and effective. For school children, literacy in the mother tongue thus serves as a transitional literacy, a bridge between the local language and the official national language that they must learn later in school.

Several countries have taken special measures to promote the education of girls. For example, Benin has exempted girls in rural areas from paying school fees, and Burkina Faso allows pregnant girls to attend classes. The Pan-African Conference on the Education of Girls (Ouagadougou, 1993) heightened awareness among senior African officials of the obstacles girls face and called on governments to analyze the specific situation in each country and adopt strategies to improve girls' access to education.

Although African countries have given more attention to promoting schooling than adult literacy, a few have undertaken ambitious efforts to raise adult literacy levels. Namibia's National Literacy Programme was launched in 1992, with a target of moving the adult literacy rate from 65 per cent to 80 per cent by the year 2000. In Benin, also in 1992, the council of ministers approved a special budget heading for adult education, and a decree was issued to establish a national literacy council. South Africa's adult basic education and training (ABET) plan emphasizes adult literacy in the first two of its four stages. ABET targets those who

**Uneven Progress in EFA: Burkina Faso**

In Burkina Faso, there has been some important progress in the provision of basic education services since 1990. Satellite schools and non-formal basic education centres have been introduced. Gross enrolment ratios and the percentage of girls attending school have increased. However, the adult illiteracy rates remain very high, at an estimated 70 per cent for men and 90 per cent for women.

With the growth in primary school enrolments, the education authorities are concerned with improving the quality of education. Surveys were undertaken in 1991 with the support of UNICEF and the World Bank to determine the level of learning achievement in primary schools. The results were not encouraging. Reading skills were found to be alarmingly low: only some twenty percent of the pupils were able to read and understand a familiar text after leaving Grade 1. Math skills were also low. A partial survey in 1995 showed that in some areas of the country, learning achievement was even lower than in 1991. The surveys note that schools often succeed in little more than producing unemployed and poorly adapted young people.

Part of the explanation is that the content of primary education remains theoretical and severed from the environment in which students live. The situation suggests an urgent need to elaborate new curricula and better testing methods in line with them. There is also a dearth of trained teachers. To respond to a crisis situation in the late 1980s, where teachers repeatedly went on strike, the government began engaging young volunteer teachers with only a few years of schooling. Now that the situation has improved, trained teachers have begun to be rehired, and a growing number of schools have at least one trained teacher. Yet another factor contributing to low levels of learning achievement was documented in a survey carried out by the ministry of education in 1995, which found that less than half of the teachers and pupils have access to instructional materials.

A programme has been launched to produce manuals for teachers and affordable books for pupils. Although the purchasing power of families was studied prior to launching the programme, the recent devaluation of the CFA franc means that few families can now afford to buy the books.
SCHOOLING CONDITIONS IN THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

The "Conditions of Primary Schools in the Least Developed Countries" was the theme of a pilot survey completed in 1995 under the sponsorship of UNESCO and UNICEF. The survey worked with a sample of 857 schools in fourteen countries: Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Maldives, Nepal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia. It collected data on the conditions of school buildings, school amenities, classroom equipment and supplies and the conditions of sanitary facilities. School enrolments and grade repetition rates, class sizes and the instructional hours per day and year were surveyed. The questionnaire also focused on the number of teachers, their qualifications, the incidence of absenteeism and turnover, and their housing conditions. Finally, school heads were asked to describe their perceptions of changes in conditions since 1991 and the most important needs today.

The survey found that the majority of children were enrolled in single-shift schools and in co-educational classes, with class sizes in Grade 1 ranging from 25 pupils in Maldives to 112 in Equatorial Guinea. Class sizes in urban areas tended to be larger than in rural areas. Multigrade teaching was practiced in Bhutan, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Nepal and logo, and to some extent in Burkina Faso.

Nearly all children were taught in a language at school that was different from the one spoken at home — with the exception of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Maldives and some parts of Nepal. The lack of textbooks was a general problem, and schools in 10 of the 14 countries had virtually no supplementary readers.

All schools surveyed reported increases in enrolments of 5 to 8 per cent for both sexes since 1991. Estimates of non-enrolled children of primary-school age varied from two per cent of boys and one per cent of girls in Maldives to 41 per cent of boys in Zambia and 46 per cent of girls in Benin. There were more non-enrolled children in rural than in urban areas. Drop-out rates averaged between 2 to 5 per cent per grade, with differences between boys and girls varying across countries. Between half and three-quarters of the pupils completed their primary schooling.

The average number of permanent full-time teachers per school ranged from 4.4 in Bangladesh to 21.1 in Maldives. Only two of the 14 countries had more women than men teachers. Half of the countries had average pupil/teacher ratios exceeding 40:1. Hours of instruction per year ranged from 397 hours in Bangladesh to 993 in Togo. The educational level of teachers, their professional training, salaries and status were generally considered inadequate. Teacher absenteeism and low morale were widespread.

Only in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Burkina Faso were over 40 per cent of the pupils attending schools that were considered in good condition or needing minor repairs. In no country did every classroom have a usable chalkboard or sitting and writing places for all children. Ventilation and lighting were deemed adequate for about 70 per cent of the pupils surveyed. Many school toilets were found to be unusable, and very few schools had electricity, water, a room for eating, or even a first-aid kit.

When asked about the single improvement most needed, school heads had a long wish-list: most wanted "repairs to buildings", "classroom furniture", and "classroom supplies". Actually, the local community could meet many of these needs if they were properly motivated and not completely pauperized.

are excluded from the economy, preparing them for further study and for work. A nation-wide "learning units campaign" was launched under ABET in 1996, and it aims to provide literacy instruction to some 100,000 learners this year. NGOs play an active role in promoting literacy and out-of-school education in many countries. Two examples among many are TOSTAN, which works with rural women in Senegal, and Action Aid, which supports the REFLECT literacy movement in Uganda.

These few examples show that despite the many hardships facing African countries, important efforts are being made to provide better education to more people. UNESCO's 1995 Report on the State of Education in Africa, 1995 concludes on an optimistic note: "There is still a great deal of hope for Education in Africa, due to the courage and determination of Africans and their development partners." The Organization of African Unity declared 1996 Education in Africa Year, marking the launch of the Education Decade for Africa. The UN Secretary General's Special Initiative for Africa is another ray of hope. The initiative seeks to put Africa back on the trajectory toward sustainable development, with basic education serving as an engine for progress. Some US$25 billion may be sought for investment in sub-Saharan African countries to provide them with a critical mass of resources for development, including educational development.
ARAB STATES

The Arab States region stretches across the north of Africa through Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf. Its 21 countries share many features of a common culture shaped largely by Islam and the Arabic language. During the early 1990s, two events have had far-reaching consequences for many of the countries of the region: the Gulf War in 1991 and the accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The economic recession at the beginning of the decade was followed by slow economic growth, hampered by a decrease in oil prices on the world market.

Population growth rates since 1990 averaged 2.6% for the region as a whole, ahead of the growth rates of all developing regions except sub-Saharan Africa (3.1%). Thus, the demographic pressure on resources increased, especially in the poorer countries.

Since 1990, the 6 to 11 age group (i.e. approximately the primary school-age population) grew by some 5 million to reach 47.3 million in 1995. This growth was matched by expanded school enrolments, pushing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the region to 90.3 per cent. If under- and over-age pupils are ignored, the age-specific Net Enrolment Ratios (NER) for boys and girls improved by three percentage points each, respectively reaching 78.6 per cent and 69.7 per cent for the region. However, four countries recorded declining NERs: Iraq, Jordan, Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Some improvement has been made since 1990 also in closing the gender gap in access to schooling, as the GER for girls moved upward by nearly 4 percentage points to 85.2 per cent, while the GER for boys increased by 2.5 percentage points, reaching 94.2 per cent. In nine of the Arab States, the age-specific NERs improved more for girls than for boys, but the gap between the aggregate NERs for the region remained at about nine percentage points. Translated in real terms, the number of out-of-school children in the 6 to 11 age-group declined from 9.1 million in 1990 to 8.2 million in 1995 – of which 6.1 million are girls.

The number of teachers increased slightly more rapidly than enrolments, and the pupil/teacher ratio now stands at an aggregate average of 26.1. Only four countries had ratios exceeding 30 pupils per teacher: Djibouti, Mauritania (53:1), Sudan and Yemen. The "feminization" of the teaching profession at primary level continued, reaching 53.2 per cent for the Arab region as a whole; Iraq and Kuwait top the scale at 70 per cent, while Mauritania and Yemen are at the other end with only 19 per cent women teachers.

According to data from 16 Arab States, the number of pupils repeating a grade in a recent year varies considerably across the region, from less than two per cent (Jordan) to around 16 per cent (Iraq, Mauritania, Tunisia). The regional average repetition rate in primary schooling appears to have decreased from 9.3 per cent in 1990 to 8.2 per cent in more recent years, which may reflect better instruction being provided by teachers with higher qualifications. This may also account for the increase in the proportion of pupils reaching Grade 4: the regional average (for 16 countries) was some 94 per cent for the 1993 pupil cohort, compared to 91 per cent for the 1987 cohort, with little or no difference between girls and boys.

Progress in respect to early childhood development appears to be slow and uneven among countries. Pre-school education is estimated to reach less than ten per cent of the 4–6 age-group in most countries, with a few exceptions: Jordan (29%), Lebanon (43%) and Kuwait (nearly 100%).

Adult illiteracy remains a serious problem in the Arab States, home to some 65 million illiterate adults. The literacy rate for the region is estimated at about 57 per cent in 1995 – 68 per cent for men but only 44 per cent for women. These rates are roughly on a par with those of sub-Saharan Africa and represent a significant improvement over the 1980 literacy rates of 55 per cent for men and 29 per cent for women. If present trends continue, the literacy rate for the region will reach 70 per cent (both sexes together) around 2010. Nine countries/territories have already passed that mark: Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Palestine, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic, and United Arab Emirates.
Taken together, these several indicators can define three groups of countries within the region. One group comprises countries whose educational development is on a steady course; a second group includes relatively populous countries that face real difficulties in maintaining and developing their education systems; and a third group comprises countries that have suffered from conflicts and/or severe economic difficulties and therefore do not have adequate funds to run their education system.

A range of strategies and actions have been applied in the region to promote basic education. One of the most comprehensive approaches is Jordan's ongoing reform of its education system (see box), a reform that anticipated the Jomtien Conference. A general concern has been to increase access to schooling, which usually entails heavy investment in infrastructure and human resources. After the 1992 earthquake in Egypt, for example, the government undertook an ambitious school-building programme that aims to build some 1500 schools per year over the next five years. It is also upgrading the qualifications of teachers through in-service training and stimulating the demand for schooling through "reading for all" festivals and demonstrations of educational technology. In neighbouring Sudan, a unique project to provide at least some schooling to children in the conflict-torn areas of the country is underway with the help of UNICEF and NGOs (see box).

Some countries (e.g. Egypt, Morocco) have taken special measures to encourage the schooling of girls. An EFA case study in Yemen found that traditional attitudes are not necessarily barriers to girls' education: family awareness combined with practical solutions to specific problems facing girls can overcome initial parental reticence.

**Educational Reform in Jordan**

Jordan's First National Conference for Educational Development in 1987 set an educational reform agenda that already anticipated the principles incorporated into the World Declaration on Education for All of 1990. The Ministry of Education's Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan is based on a systems approach. Three essential components of Education for All were included: pre-school education, primary education, and non-formal education, which includes a plan for the eradication of illiteracy and the promotion of vocational and continuing education. All the important parameters of an education system that would expand access and enhance quality were given attention, among them: legislation for free basic education, improvement of the educational administration, phasing out schools in rented buildings and double-shift schools, provision of incentives (professional, moral, material and social) to teachers, improvement of curricula and textbooks, utilization of educational technologies, provision of libraries and laboratories, and establishing learning resource centres.

**Educating Displaced Children in Sudan**

Sudan's Basic Education Project for the Internally Displaced Children in the war-torn southern states serves a heterogeneous population of 2 million children from 60 ethnolinguistic groups and three principal religious affiliations: Islam, Christianity, and traditional African religions. The project is an example of a multifarious partnership that includes the central government, UN agencies, Islamic NGOs, international NGOs, Sudanese churches, bilateral aid agencies, and the displaced communities. The Sudanese government requires one curriculum, with Arabic as the language of instruction. However, in the project area, it tolerates the use of local languages (written in Arabic script) in the first two grades and the development of curricula to meet differentiated needs of displaced children. The complementary Mobile Emergency Education Project by Barge, started in 1995, is a good example of bold resourcefulness in delivering education to isolated communities along the Nile River. Although the quality of education in the usual terms of learning to read and write remains low, the projects have succeeded in maintaining an operational education system despite the difficult conditions in the war zone.
Improving the quality of instruction is a shared aim of many Arab States. Upgrading teacher performance by raising entry requirements to the profession (Egypt, Jordan, Gulf States, Libya) and in-service training, especially for teachers in rural areas (Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic), and providing incentives to attract and retain teachers are among the measures applied in the region. Efforts to improve educational quality have also focused on the curriculum. In some cases, new subjects such as nutrition, general and reproductive health, and environmental issues have been added.

In Palestine, a small number of private schools offer an innovative curriculum on the theme "Education for awareness and involvement" to develop pupils' awareness of self, society, the economy, culture and political structures. The teachers are given in-service training and develop their own methods and materials.

The EFA policy review seminar for the Arab States found that funding for education is neither sufficient nor well used. Education does not receive an appropriate share of national budgets and, within the education budget, a disproportionate share (30-40%) often goes to higher education. The seminar also found that although the contribution of the private sector to education is growing, it is still very limited and sometimes thwarted by bureaucratic obstacles. NGO involvement in education is also increasing, but lacks organization and tends to be weak and ineffective. Furthermore, the mechanisms established or assigned to coordinate Education for All efforts too often become obstacles for achieving goals. The seminar felt that there was an urgent need to reorganize these mechanisms and to improve their competence in data collection, analysis and overall management.
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Five of the high-population countries (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan) are in this region, where population growth is a major obstacle to achieving universal primary education. In East Asia, rapid economic growth has placed new demands on education systems, calling for a redefinition of basic learning needs. At the same time, new pockets of poverty have sprung up in sprawling urban areas, where poor children often drop out of school to take menial jobs in the informal sector.

After the Jomtien Conference, most countries in the region organized national EFA policy meetings, and many have adopted new policies and plans aimed at reducing poverty, improving educational quality and building institutional capacities to deliver basic education. Primary school enrolment figures show an overall improvement in gross and net enrolment ratios since 1990: the region’s aggregate enrolment grew by some 27.4 million pupils (i.e. an 8.3% increase in five years), mainly in South Asia, where there were 22.6 million more children in school in 1995. The number of teachers rose by 11 percent, and overall pupil/teacher ratios stood at 29:1 in East Asia and 44:1 in South Asia. According to a recent estimate, universal primary education by the year 2000 in South Asia would require some 1.3 million additional teachers, i.e. a 40 percent increase over the current number.

Although four countries (China, Fiji, the Republic of Korea and Philippines) reported declining net enrolment ratios, the aggregate NER rose by more than four percentage points in East Asia to 87.4 per cent and in South Asia to 64.5 per cent. The overall NER for boys increased more than the NER for girls in both sub-regions, so the gender gap widened slightly by 1995 to 10 percentage points in East Asia and 20 percentage point in South Asia. Enrolments expanded faster than the school-age population, so the number of out-of-school children in the 6 to 11 age-group decreased by 16.1 million to 56.5 million in 1995, of which 33.2 million are girls.

Few countries reported data on learning achievement, but repetition and drop-out rates indicate there are problems in the quality of education and in achievement. According to available data for 15 countries, the average repetition rate in primary schooling appears to be around 8 per cent. Surveys conducted in 1987 and 1993 suggest that the proportion of pupils reaching Grade 4 rose slightly in East Asia, from 82.1 to 84.0 per cent, while in South Asia, improvement was more pronounced, from 69.6 to 77.0 per cent. Another analysis shows that a higher percentage of girls than boys reach Grade 4 in South Asia.

Adult literacy rates have risen throughout the region, from 80.3 to 83.6 per cent in East Asia and from 72.2 to 76.3 per cent in South Asia. But the gender gap remains pronounced, with women's literacy rates lagging behind men's by 14 percentage points (at 76.3%) in East Asia and by 26 percentage point (at 36.3%) in South Asia. In a few countries, women's literacy rates are as low as 15 per cent (Nepal and Afghanistan). Although literacy rates are rising and some countries have launched major programmes to

Making Literacy Reach Millions: The National Literacy Campaign in India

Some 88 million learners in the 15 to 35 age-group have been reached in India through the "total literacy campaigns" at the district level. These campaigns, representing a nationwide effort to increase the number of literate adults, are the fruit of a partnership between the central government's National Literacy Mission and state governments.

Social mobilization is the key to the success of the Total Literacy Campaigns. At the district and sub-district levels, the campaigns are managed by specially created committees, generally composed of voluntary agencies. At the village level, communities themselves are in charge of mobilization efforts. Volunteers conduct community surveys, visit families, organize cultural programmes and mobilize villagers to build needed infrastructure. Special efforts are made to reach women and members of disadvantaged groups.

According to the National Literacy Mission's 1993-1994 annual report, 255 literacy campaigns and 7 post-literacy campaigns have been run in 275 (out of 500) districts, spread across the Indian sub-continent.
promote literacy (see box on India), rapid population growth in South Asia meant that the absolute number of illiterates increased from 384 million in 1990 to 416 million in 1995.

The challenge in this region is to find cost-effective ways of providing basic education to vast numbers.

Several countries have attempted to diversify schooling and find new funding sources. In India and Bangladesh, millions of children have been reached through "home schools" and "community schools" staffed by para-professional teachers.

Various schemes to introduce local taxes or debt relief for education and to set up school enterprises can be found in China, Indonesia and Thailand. Some countries reported on policy measures aimed at reducing drop-out. These range from introducing mother-tongue instruction in the first grades to programmes that aim to raise the quality of education (see box). In the Philippines, studies found that drop-out rates were highest in boys at the Grade 4 had increased after the recent privatization of cattle herds. Parents needed their sons to tend cattle and felt that four years of schooling was enough. Consequently, the government launched a National Programme on Poverty, which includes initiatives to sensitize parents to the benefits of education and promotes non-formal programmes run by local communities for drop-out children.

Many countries have adopted policies granting more autonomy to local authorities and developing cooperation between the central government, districts and communities. Local authorities have been encouraged to take more responsibility for early childhood development programmes. Until now, such programmes have tended to serve urban areas, and participation rates remain low throughout the region. In Thailand, the seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan sets goals to improve and universalize pre-school education by

**Local Authorities Have Been Encouraged to Take More Responsibility for Early Childhood Development Programmes**

**Parent and Community Involvement in Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka, the Primary School Development Programme was introduced to address the needs of poor communities and to improve the quality of primary schooling. The programme’s specific objectives are to increase enrolment, improve language and math skills, build better school facilities and reduce disparities between districts.

The project relies on a chain of cooperation involving government officials, groups of schools and parents.

Project officers stationed in various provinces work with communities at the district level in setting up resource centres where curricula are developed and teachers trained. These centres share their work with schools, which are organized into groups of eight, referred to as "school families", a concept that has also been adopted to non-project schools, even in urban areas. The project also involves actual families, particularly mothers.

As a result, schools and classrooms have been radically transformed as the project schools have found new ways of enhancing the learning environment. For example, one activity involves making handwritten booklets for the school library from poems and parables read during the morning assembly. This practice has since been adopted by several other schools in the project areas. Another important result: the participating schools recorded a low 0.8 per cent drop-out rate, against the national average of 2.64 per cent.

In villages where schools did not offer the full primary cycle. As a result, the current development plan aims to increase the number of schools offering all primary grades.

A comprehensive survey on the causes of rising drop-out in Mongolia found that the drop-out rate of expanding childcare facilities in villages.

Education systems across Asia are faced with the formidable task of achieving massive expansion while improving quality and adapting to a changing economic context. A number of supporting measures have been
adopted to develop capacities at various levels in implementing decentralization, participatory management, and the local development and dissemination of innovations. Education is increasingly treated within the overall development context, which opens new possibilities for partnerships to promote basic education. EFA strategies also give importance to social mobilization and advocacy.

Several countries are engaged in efforts to improve teacher training and learning assessment. Many country reports note that basic data collection and the compiling of statistics to support policy analysis and management also need to be given more attention.

**The E-9 Initiative: A Special Commitment to EFA**

The EFA Summit of Nine High-Population Countries (New Delhi, December 1993) was certainly the most visible initiative across regions to follow up the Jomtien Conference. The summit brought together the leaders of Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan — subsequently referred to as the E-9 countries. The leaders made special commitments to reach their EFA goals.

Together, the E-9 countries are home to more than half of the world's population and over 70 per cent of the world's illiterate adults. They share certain common features and problems: strong demographic pressures, substantial remote populations, unwieldy education systems, relatively low levels of central government funding for education, and persistent problems in reducing adult illiteracy and (except for Brazil) the literacy gap between men and women.

The E-9 initiative, which is supported by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNDP, promotes cooperation among its members to accelerate progress in such areas as distance education and curriculum reform. The aggregate primary school enrolment in the E-9 countries increased from 335.4 million in 1990 to 366.4 million in 1995, i.e. about two-thirds of the world total. The report prepared for the summit in 1993 suggests that over half of the increase in enrolment at that time was probably attributable to measures taken by the governments in following up the Jomtien Conference. Seven of the nine countries reported significant increases in spending on basic education since 1990.

Although literacy rates have also improved in all nine countries since 1990, population grew more rapidly, so the absolute number of illiterate adults increased by some 21 million by 1995, but is expected to decrease slightly by the year 2000.

At the recent E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting (Bali, September 1995), the nine countries reported on further progress in enrolments, the training of teachers and the construction of schools. The ministers renewed their pledge to give special attention to providing basic education for girls and women, and undertook to expand their efforts to meet the basic learning needs of adolescents and adults, especially in remote and rural areas.
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The Jomtien Conference coincided with a widespread movement towards democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region characterized by a strong tradition of education and, more recently, rapid economic expansion. As a result, change in the past five years has focused on three fronts: first, redefining education's role and organization in a more democratic society; second, improving the content and quality of education; and third, reducing geographical and gender disparities through targeting the poor.

Although national EFA policies and regional forums for policy dialogue existed before 1990, many countries have adopted new EFA plans in the 1990s reflecting a broader definition of basic education. In several cases, this has resulted in new legislation on education (Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Venezuela). Against the backdrop of democratization, countries have also sought to build political consensus across the political spectrum in an attempt to ensure continuity in educational policies. This approach informed the current education plans in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama.

It is often pointed out, however, that more needs to be done to build a social consensus by involving a wide range of social partners in formulating educational policies. When Brazil developed its ten-year EFA plan, there were extensive discussions among various government ministries, non-governmental organizations and international agencies, such as UNESCO. One of the plan's major initiatives is PRONAICA, a programme aimed at children and adolescents. Founded on the premise that problems at school are symptoms of much deeper social issues, PRONAICA works with children and their families and seeks to strengthen social bonds through cultural and sports activities.

The student population in the region grew markedly between 1990 and 1995. The 6 to 11 age-group increased from an estimated 59.7 million in 1990 to 64.6 million in 1995. At the same time, overall NERs rose 2 percentage points to 88.5 per cent. However, a number of countries recorded a decrease in NERs: Barbados, Chile, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay and Saint Kitts and Nevis. Yet other countries recorded increases in NER of over 10 per cent: Bolivia, Colombia, and Guatemala.

The gender gap in enrolments is persistent. The aggregate NER of boys is higher than that of girls and moved up to 91.9 per cent between 1990 and 1995, compared with 85.7 per cent for girls in 1995. However, data from 14 countries suggest that girls tend to stay in school longer once they are enrolled: 92.3 per cent of the girls reached Grade 4, compared with 85.5 per cent of the boys.

Out of some 3.3 million teachers in 1995 (an increase of some 270,000 since 1990) 75.8 per cent were women. There is a notable "feminization" of the teaching profession in the region, as the percentage of women teachers grows steadily in most countries, with a few exceptions (Argentina, Dominica, and Nicaragua). Pupil-teacher ratios decreased from 27:1 to 25:1 in the first half of the decade.

Average adult literacy rates were estimated at 86.6 per cent in 1995 with little difference between men and women. However, flagrant disparities persist. Guatemala, for example, estimates that 56 per cent of the total female population is illiterate, with illiteracy in rural areas running as high as 77 per cent.

Reforms in the region deal mainly with improving curricula, teacher training and management. High repetition rates suggest shortcomings in providing quality instruction and catering to the needs of heterogeneous populations. Nearly one-third of all children in primary school repeat a grade every year, and the repetition rate for Grade 1 reaches 40 per cent in some areas. Many children take ten or more years to complete the primary school cycle, resulting in high social costs and significant financial wastage. Moreover, one-third of primary schools in the region do not provide the full primary school cycle, which means that pupils have to move to a different school when they reach a certain age — or end their schooling.
In an attempt to better adapt schools to local needs and encourage a more dynamic learning process, there has been a marked trend towards decentralization in the region. Instead of a single national curriculum, many countries are now defining a core curriculum, but leaving space for subject matter geared to the local environment. Decentralization has involved some far-reaching efforts to grant schools more autonomy, but local personnel have often found themselves ill-equipped to cope with the new responsibilities.

Teachers in particular tend to lack adequate training and motivation.

As part of their reforms, most countries are now introducing financial incentives for teachers based on their performance, a measure that often entails revising regulations governing the teaching profession and altering salary scales. In Chile, for instance, strengthening the teaching profession is one of the five main objectives of the country's education reform. Besides boosting teachers' salaries, measures have included expanded in-service training and distance education for teachers.

The shift towards greater pluralism has also encouraged efforts to promote and develop intercultural bilingual education (see box). In light of bilingual education's impact on quality and learning, important initiatives exist to develop instructional materials in indigenous languages and to share these between countries using the same languages.

**Bilingual Education Gains Legitimacy**

The issue of bilingual education is emerging on policy agendas in a number of countries across the world. In Latin America, numerous studies point to a clear link between ethnicity and language on the one hand, and low levels of education, income and chronic poverty on the other.

Recent political changes in the region towards pluralism and democracy have enhanced efforts to promote bilingual education. Bilingualism is closely related to the wider issues of inequalities between urban and rural areas, tensions between the dominant language group and other groups, and ultimately, of the nature and goals of society.

Now beyond the experimental stage, intercultural bilingual education in Latin America is a common feature of reforms. Several countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Paraguay) have even changed their constitutions to make provisions for bilingual education. In other countries, such as Nicaragua and Chile, new laws are being drawn up in favour of indigenous peoples.

Most countries in Latin America that have introduced education in the mother tongue in the early grades report a significant improvement in educational quality, better school performance and attendance, a more harmonious emotional development of the child, and closer ties between the school and the community.
Europe and North America

With virtually 100 per cent enrolment rates at the primary level and a long tradition of free and compulsory education, Europe and North America generally receive minimal attention in FFA reviews. It has long been assumed that universal primary education would assure universal literacy. Although literacy problems are on a different scale from developing countries, they do exist: recent studies indicate that between 10 and 20 per cent of the adult population in industrialized countries have difficulties with basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. The economic recession has marginalized growing numbers of workers, while rapid technological change and international competition call for a more highly skilled workforce. In the former Soviet bloc, political changes and the transition towards a market economy have disrupted education systems: education budgets have been slashed, enrolments in some countries are declining, and many teachers are leaving the profession for better-paid jobs.

As awareness grows of the extent of functional literacy in industrialized countries, some governments are paying more attention to workplace and family literacy. Since adults tend to enrol for literacy courses out of concern for their children and their jobs, the Basic Skills Agency in the United Kingdom obtained funding to initiate a family literacy scheme whereby parents, especially mothers, improve their literacy while encouraging the development of their children's learning skills. In Scotland, special tutors work in communities to promote family literacy and basic learning skills. As regards workplace literacy, countries such as France, Germany and Sweden, where tax policies encourage firms to expand job training, have been successful in getting workers to participate in basic education and retraining programmes.

Any discussion on literacy in the industrialized countries inevitably fuels debate on learning achievement in school. In its mid-decade report, Germany notes that out of the six target dimensions (set forth in the Jomtien Framework for Action), the fourth one remains an ongoing concern: reducing the adult functional illiteracy rate and taking preventive measures. A recent study conducted in Germany on reading achievement in

Low Literacy Levels Hamper Economic Competitiveness

The relationship between literacy and economic performance prompted seven governments to conduct the first comparative study of adult literacy in industrialized countries. Published by the OECD and Statistics Canada, the survey found that over 20 per cent of adults in some of the world's richest countries have literacy skills at only the most basic level. The survey defined literacy as a broad set of skills relevant to people's daily lives and to performance on the job. Participants were tested on:

- Prose literacy, measuring ability to understand and use information in a text;
- Document literacy, measuring ability to process information in everyday materials such as tables, schedules and maps; and
- Quantitative literacy, measuring ability to identify and perform arithmetic operations arising in everyday reading situations.

The report argues that governments can no longer rely on a policy of gradually extending schooling to meet the demands for new, high-level competencies generated by the economy. It calls for a strong commitment to provide lifelong learning opportunities.

Although formal education strongly influences literacy levels, it is not the only determining factor. There is scope for individuals to improve their literacy through their own efforts and behaviour. However, the survey found that in every country, individuals with lower literacy skills were less likely to participate in adult education than those with higher skills. Another finding was that literacy improves with practice, but deteriorates if not used. The clear message to employers and governments is that measures to improve adult literacy will be more effective if they are part of a wider effort to increase the day-to-day use of reading and writing. Also, because few adults acknowledge that they have a literacy problem, any strategy to link literacy gains to improved productivity needs to start by changing attitudes to overcome this hesitation.

primary schools warned that 1.4 per cent of the pupils surveyed were at risk of becoming functionally illiterate, but it should be noted that German was not the mother tongue of more than half of these pupils.

In times of growing international economic competition and declining domestic resources, education systems are under pressure to become more cost-effective. In Sweden, a new policy in place since 1991 seeks to encourage diversity by allowing private schools to operate within the education system. Since 1993, municipalities have been free to use their state subsidies for education as they see fit. The legislative framework for the school system has been changed, and a new curriculum sets down goals and guidelines for national evaluation of achievement. This has entailed fundamental changes in the control and organization of schools. The United Kingdom has introduced a voucher system for pre-school education to allow parents of four-year-olds to exchange a voucher for a pre-school place of their choice in the state, private or voluntary sector. Alongside more autonomy, schools are being closely monitored to ensure that they meet required standards since financial allocations are often based on output.

A growing consensus in OECD countries (members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) that the evaluation and assessment of students, institutions and systems as a whole should be an integral component of educational policy-making and practice. As noted in the 1990 meeting of OECD education ministers, setting standards requires ongoing research into the definition of competencies not just in core skill areas, such as literacy and numeracy, but also in such disciplines as philosophy, social studies and citizenship.

Political upheavals in Eastern Europe since the early 1990s are having an important impact on EFA in these countries. Many reforms have focused on revising and modernizing curricula, especially the teaching of history and civic education. More attention is being given to foreign languages, ethnic issues and religious education. In Slovakia, curricula were "de-ideologized", compulsory teaching in Russian was abolished and private and church-run schools recognized. Slovakia's new curriculum includes the "Human Rights at School" project supported by Amnesty International, UNESCO, the Timecek Foundation and the Council of Europe among others. Its objective is to raise awareness about human rights, promote respect for differences of opinion and work towards reducing prejudice. In some countries, however, the reform process has run into obstacles. Latvia, for example, reported that although a new education policy was a priority after independence in 1991, reaching a consensus on its exact orientations proved more difficult.

Alongside more autonomy, schools are being closely monitored to ensure that they meet required standards. The policy review seminars held in late 1995 and early 1996 as part of the EFA Mid-Decade Review process provided syntheses of the main trends and issues in each region. Most or all of the seminars found that the following areas of concern, which are not listed in any priority order, need more attention and forceful action:

- The "expanded vision of basic education" needs to be applied more rigorously in both policy and practice. This entails moving beyond the focus on primary schooling to give more attention to out-of-school education and to provide learning opportunities for all age-groups.
- More resources must be found for basic education, and they need to be more efficiently utilized. Partnerships between different actors and stakeholders in education need to be developed and strengthened.
- The recruitment, training, working conditions and status of teachers must be improved to match the importance of their function in society. Appropriate incentives will be needed to attract and retain good teachers, especially women and those prepared to teach in rural areas.
The quality of the teaching and learning process, both in content and methods, must be improved to enhance learning achievement. Curricula relevant to the basic learning needs of the pupils, adequate provision of learning materials, and support to teachers are crucial elements. Teachers need to be trained to help each individual learn according to his or her needs and capacities.

Systematic monitoring and assessment of learning need to be developed and strengthened to support better teaching and management. There is a particular need for simple assessment methods that can be used in schools with few resources.

More emphasis needs to be given to making basic education truly accessible to girls and women. Successful experiences can be built on, such as the initiatives that bring together decision-makers, administrators, community leaders, parents and even young girls to remove gender bias from school systems and to encourage parents to enrol their daughters.

Provision of basic education for children, youth and adults with special needs, whether due to disabilities or emergency situations, also merits more attention. The international community often can play an important role in this regard.

More efforts are needed to develop literacy, numeracy and general life skills for adolescents and adults, as well as complementary efforts to promote a reading environment that encourages the further development of these skills.
III. IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

The Mid-Decade Review of Progress towards Education for All should properly be a re-view — a fresh look at the situation of basic education and Education for All goals in the light of experience, the evolving context and popular aspirations. It must also be a pre-view — a considered look forward to anticipate emerging challenges, to assess possibilities, and to determine priorities for reflection and action. The countries that have participated actively in the Mid-Decade Review exercise have attempted to do this for themselves, and the Forum meeting is the occasion for this review and preview to be done on a world scale on behalf of the international community.

A JOMTIEN EFFECT?

Although Education for All goals were clearly on the world’s development agenda long before the 1990 Jomtien Conference — going back at least to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — there is strong evidence that the river flowing in that direction is now moving faster due to the stream of ideas and commitments generated by Jomtien. As seen in the preceding pages, progress since 1990 has been uneven and often below expectations, but progress is being made. The principal indicator of access to basic education, primary school enrolment, has improved at a faster pace than during the 1980s in all of the developing regions. And literacy rates, the principal, albeit crude, indicator of the educational level within societies, have improved as well.

Promising policies and measures have been adopted by many countries to expand access to basic education and to enhance learning achievement, but their results may take several more years to become evident. Major funding agencies are now more inclined to support such country initiatives, and NGOs are also taking a more active role in providing basic education. Various structures for cooperation at country, regional and international levels in promoting basic education have developed during the 1990s, including this International Consultative Forum. Also the recent world conferences on major development issues all underscored the importance of basic education in respect to the rights of the child, the environment, human rights, reproductive health, reducing poverty and promoting social equity and the status of women.

NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

Thus, the concept of Education for All has definitely gained currency worldwide and has inspired numerous resolutions and policy statements, as well as legislation and educational planning. However, not all countries have matched the rhetoric with determined action, and many of those that are committed to EFA face difficult problems. Also, with few exceptions, the industrialized countries seem not yet to have realized that Education for All is relevant to them, too, and is something more than having all children enrolled in school. As the economy of these countries becomes increasingly information-based and geared to the world market, ever more sophisticated literacy and numeracy skills become essential in the workplace and in the community, thereby raising the level of basic learning needs.

Despite its currency, Education for All is often misunderstood as "schooling for all" and is equated with Universal Primary Education — a long proclaimed goal of the international community. Furthermore, the important Jomtien concept of meeting basic learning needs
has received much less attention than the effort to provide a school place for every child. The school curriculum is presumed to meet these needs, but very few countries have reported on efforts to define them. Since basic learning needs obviously change over a person’s lifetime and evolve in each society over time, this important foundation for EFA certainly merits much more active – and continuous – attention than it has received so far. Perhaps partly due to these conceptual problems, the “expanded vision of basic education” contained in the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All has been followed selectively. Most attention and resources have gone into increasing primary school enrolments and reducing gender disparities. Far less attention has been given to meeting the basic learning needs of adults and out-of-school youth. Although adult literacy rates continue to improve, the male-female gap is closing very slowly. The importance of early childhood development activities appears to be more widely appreciated, and there has been some expansion in provision, but the numbers of children served in developing countries are still very low. Finally, despite signs of concern about improving the quality of education and raising learning achievement, there is insufficient evidence of effective action being taken.

**The “expanded vision of basic education” has been followed selectively**

**Improving learning achievement**

Rich and poor countries alike are concerned about the quality of education offered in their schools and the perceived inadequacies in the learning achievement of many children, especially in poor rural and urban communities. Similar concerns, but on a lesser scale, are expressed about the effectiveness of many literacy and other basic education programmes proposed to adults and to out-of-school children. Disappointing test scores, repetition and drop-out rates, and long average years of schooling to produce a primary school graduate are cited as evidence that access to basic education is no measure of effective learning.

The main factors that can improve learning are generally known: healthy, motivated pupils who attend regularly, well-prepared and motivated teachers, a sound and relevant curriculum, and good, available learning materials, to name the obvious ones in the classroom. Of course many other factors affect learning, such as the language of instruction, the educational level of parents, and a supportive cultural environment in the home and community.

Yet suitable conditions for effective learning are relatively rare in developing countries and even in some communities in the richer countries. *What lessons can be drawn from experience and research that could be applied at low cost in resource-poor communities to improve the learning achievement of children, adolescents and adults?*

A related issue is the assessment of learning, which is generally little or poorly practised in the primary schools and out-of-school basic education programmes of developing countries. *How can assessment be introduced and strengthened as a means of enhancing learning, rather than selecting out “poor achievers”?

FOUR CHALLENGES

With these general remarks in mind on the path traversed thus far, what key issues in Education for All need to be brought to the attention of the major stakeholders? What lines of action can the Forum recommend for priority attention by governments and their partners, and also by the international community?

In its deliberations, the Forum can build on the growing awareness, emerging from the recent world conferences, that basic education is not simply a sectoral matter. It is now recognized as a necessary prerequisite for sustainable progress in any major dimension of development. The true wealth of a nation is composed of the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of its people – attributes that depend largely on the quality and provision of basic education.

The Forum is invited to structure its deliberations around the following four inter-related themes that reflect the principal challenges identified during the Mid-Decade Review exercise.

**Access to basic education is no measure of effective learning**

**Access to basic education is no measure of effective learning**
What simple methods can be applied even in poor environments to assess the learning of life skills, attitudes and values?

**Resources and Partnerships for EFA**

Virtually all countries report that public funding for basic education is inadequate. Expanding access and improving quality generally require more resources, but also better use of available resources. Despite widely acknowledged concerns about equity in the provision of education and well-publicized research findings showing the high return on investment in basic education, it continues to receive a disproportionately low share of the education budget in many countries.

Although some countries are truly contending with severe economic constraints, it is also evident that a shift in state priorities could often release abundant resources for education (see box).

**Funding Basic Education: Scarcity or Choice?**

Is public funding for basic education really limited by scarcity of resources controlled by the state? At the 1993 Education for All Summit of Nine High-Population Countries, Mahbub ul Haq, director of UNDP’s Human Development Report, stated: “Let us not forget that the cost of each jet fighter equals one million children in primary school. If only the leaders of the nine summit countries would commit themselves today that in the next seven years, they will buy only 75 fewer jets, the targets of basic education for all would be met. How much more powerful would that sentence of political commitment be compared to millions of words that flow from such conferences, year in, year out.”

Efforts to recover some costs of education from the immediate beneficiaries and to shift costs to local communities have had mixed and often marginal results.

**External Assistance**

External assistance will continue to be necessary and can be catalytic in helping countries undertake needed reforms.

What guidance for the future can be drawn from experience? What other funding sources within and outside government could and should be tapped for investment in basic education?

The Jomtien Conference emphasized the importance of building partnerships for the provision of basic education both in and out of school. Partnerships generally make more and varied resources available for education, including intellectual, managerial, and institutional resources, as well as funding. Some countries report progress in this regard, but others state, or give the impression, that the education ministry is the sole provider and sponsor of basic education.

Partnerships in education, as in other fields, require time and effort to develop. Mention is made in some reports and case studies of problems of cooperation and even consultation between the several providers of basic education. While some NGOs report they have closer relations now with the education authorities, others feel ignored or called on only to provide low-cost basic education for marginalized groups.

What partnership arrangements have proved effective and why? How can the business community, one of the principal stakeholders in education, become more involved in financing and providing basic education and training, and also in facilitating the transition from education to work? How can the media, with their tremendous capacity to inform and motivate millions of people, become a true partner in meeting basic learning needs?
Building capacities to provide basic education

"Capacities" is a term that calls to mind institutional arrangements and skilled professionals — the qualitative dimension of resources. Education systems, or more accurately, school systems, represent a set of capacities that are intended to provide education to those enrolled in school. But school systems in nearly all countries are having difficulty filling this role and are even less equipped to provide basic education according to the "expanded vision" of the Jomtien Declaration. To meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults over their lifetime calls for imaginative strategies that go beyond mere, but necessary, school reforms. Employers, labour unions, voluntary associations, the mass media, libraries, and the new information technologies, together with schools and universities, presumably all could contribute to an integrated basic education sub-system or network of inter-linked resources and activities. What can be done now to prepare the way for the careful construction of effective basic education "sub-systems"?

Skilled personnel of many kinds, including teachers, curriculum specialists, textbook authors, librarians, computer programmers, educational broadcasters, planners, managers, etc. are needed to provide basic education in and outside the school. How can they be recruited, trained and managed to work together or in parallel to meet basic learning needs effectively?

One of the obvious weaknesses of education systems today is data collection and analysis, or more generally, the management of information. There is a serious lack of reliable and current data on many aspects of basic education, and even school statistics are often incomplete and unreliable. What measures can be taken now, at reasonable cost, to improve the knowledge base and flow of information needed to manage basic education activities efficiently?

Meeting the basic learning needs of all

Building effective capacities for EFA will take time, but what measures can be applied now, or in the short-term, to meet the basic learning needs of the children, adolescents and adults who are presently ill-served? The principle of equity demands that basic education of good quality be accessible to all, and not just a few or even a majority. Yet, resources and capacities are often insufficient to offer every child a place in school, to give a second chance to those who drop out, to provide early childhood development activities in all communities, and to offer literacy and life-skills programmes to youths and adults.

In some cases, people "select themselves out" of educational opportunities. The daughter stays home to mind the babies, the son prefers to earn money now rather than completing his schooling, and the parents drop out of a literacy course because they find it difficult and embarrassing.

In other cases, however, people are excluded from education by a lack of facilities or by practical obstacles. If there is no school within walking distance, young children, and especially girls, are not enrolled. Others turn away from the school because they cannot afford the fees, or the books, or the uniforms. Still others drop out because the teacher speaks a language that is strange to them, or they cannot follow the lessons because of problems of seeing or hearing.

Certain population groups continue to be less well provided with basic education, and their educational attainment lags behind the norm for the country. Girls and women are probably the most obvious of the disadvantaged in most developing countries. Other disadvantaged groups include rural dwellers, the urban poor, nomads, street children, disabled persons, ethnic/linguistic minorities, and so on. Learners from some of these groups could be easily accommodated in existing schools and programmes, while others might require special facilities or programmes to meet their specific needs.

Girls and women are probably the most obvious of the disadvantaged in most developing countries.
Many countries now have considerable experience in providing basic education to such under-served groups, and some have made notable progress in reducing inter-group disparities. Yet, such disparities in educational provision and attainment are still widespread, even in industrialized countries.

What measures have proved most effective in stimulating demand for basic education and for extending it to disadvantaged groups? How can the international community assist countries in achieving a more equitable provision of basic education?

**EFA IN THE YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND**

Human beings have the unique capacity to transform experience into symbols, first for speaking, then for writing and calculating. This capacity enables humans to construct knowledge about physical and social reality and then use that knowledge to transform that reality. Learning is thus a natural human function that all societies organize and promote, and the global forces of competition and cooperation oblige them to do so ever more thoroughly and well. In this sense, Education for All is probably inevitable.

The preceding pages show that real progress has been made and is being made to expand and improve the provision of basic education. The Jomtien Conference has given renewed impetus to this movement. But EFA will not happen without continuous effort. As seen earlier, the evolution of basic learning needs means that EFA becomes an ever more ambitious goal presenting new challenges.

However, the immediate task is to focus on specific goals within reach during the next five to ten years and then to marshal the resources and forces needed to achieve them. The inevitable can and must be made more immediate. Like justice, education delayed is education denied, and education denied has a heavy human cost.
Annex

The Mid-Decade Review of Progress towards Education for All

The Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs agreed upon at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, March 1990) foresaw the need for a mid-decade review of progress in these terms: "Governments and organizations undertake mid-term evaluations of the implementation of their respective plans and adjust them as needed. Governments, organizations and development agencies undertake comprehensive policy reviews at regional and global levels (1995-1996)."

The International Consultative Forum on Education for All, the global mechanism established to follow up the Jomtien Conference, became the designated focal point for the Mid-Decade Review. The Forum decided the Review should aim to enable countries (i) to construct a comprehensive picture of each country's progress towards EFA, (ii) to identify priorities and promising strategies for overcoming obstacles and accelerating progress, and (iii) to revise national plans of action accordingly.

The Review consisted of several complementary activities:

a. National governments were invited to carry out their own mid-decade reviews according to guidelines provided by the Forum;
b. Some twenty country case studies were commissioned to document interesting EFA experiences;
c. A survey was made of the policies and practices of the major multilateral and bilateral agencies that support EFA;
d. A pilot survey of the actual conditions of primary schools in 14 of the Least Developed Countries was undertaken;
e. Reports were solicited from NGO groups and the principal international organization of the teaching profession;
f. Seven regional policy review seminars were organized in the developing regions to help assess the information provided in the mid-decade review reports from countries:

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>East Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>Hanoi, Viet-Nam</td>
<td>14-16 November 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>Doha, Qatar</td>
<td>14-17 January 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
<td>15-18 January 1996</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
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<td>29-31 January 1996</td>
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<td>West &amp; Central Africa</td>
<td>Yaoundé, Cameroon</td>
<td>11-14 February 1996</td>
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<td>Inhambane, South Africa</td>
<td>20-23 February 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Caribbean</td>
<td>Montego Bay, Jamaica</td>
<td>28 February - 1 March 1996</td>
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A global synthesis of the results of these several activities is contained in the present report to the mid-decade meeting of the Forum, in Amman, Jordan, 16-19 June 1996. The conclusions and recommendations of the Forum will subsequently be communicated to the heads of governments, ministers of education, and heads of development agencies and concerned NGOs.