Poverty Eradication through Education

Breaking the Poverty Cycle for Children

Ministry of Education, Uganda
Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO
Poverty Eradication through Education

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Abject poverty is evidence of the failure of modern societies to adopt social and economic strategies that benefit all people. It deprives individuals of their dignity, and denies them the opportunity to be participating citizens, with a sense of self-respect and a feeling of well-being. By 1995, it was estimated that 1.3 billion people were living on less than one dollar per day, and the situation was being aggravated by wars, civil unrest, and the loss of employment through economic restructuring and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

As a worldwide endeavour to eradicate abject poverty, the United Nations declared the years 1997 to 2006 to be the decade for poverty eradication. Many international and national initiatives followed this declaration, and they identified education as a key to poverty eradication. The UNDP carried out research on the poor in 30 countries, while The World Bank developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), that would serve as an operational framework for directing resources to the poorest. UNESCO, in order to launch its programme, organized an interagency meeting, and produced a document ‘Education and Poverty Eradication – Cooperation for Action.’ This document recognized that the role of education in poverty eradication must go beyond literacy skills and school enrolment, to empowering people to take charge of their lives, and be active participants in social and economic development. Since then UNESCO has made poverty eradication an important part of its programme. The organization demonstrated by its participation in The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa, that it will spare no effort to ensure that education and poverty eradication remain on the global agenda.

In April 2000, education specialists met in Dakar, Senegal, to renew their commitment to education for all for another fifteen years. Aware that poverty and social exclusion are a huge barrier to education for all, the Forum participants pledged themselves to ‘promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well integrated sector framework, clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies.’ Important inputs to poverty eradication will be made through efforts to achieve the goals of EFA – early childhood education, good quality primary education for all children, meeting the learning needs of youth and adults, improving adult literacy, the elimination of gender disparities, and improving all aspects of the quality of education.

Many families have lived in abject poverty for generations. Children, particularly girls, continue to inherit family poverty. This cycle must be broken. At a time when countries were preparing their PRSPs, it was opportune for UNESCO, jointly with ISESCO and the Government of Uganda, to organize an international workshop on ‘Creating an
Enabling Environment for Poverty Eradication', in Uganda from 30 July to 2 August 2002. The workshop provided a forum for educators, and representatives from various sectors from 24 countries, 10 UN agencies, and international and national NGOs, to share their experiences in education and poverty eradication. The underlying message of the meeting was 'Breaking the Poverty Cycle for Children.' Among other areas covered were: pro-poor policies, the challenges of poverty eradication, cultural traditions and practices, increasing the potential for poverty eradication, and monitoring interventions needed to benefit poor people. The workshop concluded with a session on how to progress from short-term to long-term development.

Since the government of Uganda had resolved to make poverty eradication a priority in its national agenda, the level of its participation in the meeting was exceptional. There were public officials representing the 16 poorest districts of the country. The Minister of Education opened the workshop, and shared the closing ceremony with the Minister of Health, and the cabinet representative of the Ministry of Finance.

In the closing session of the meeting, participants made personal commitments to take follow-up measures. It was also agreed that the draft document would be submitted for discussions and inputs over a few months before the final version was prepared. The present document has been shared with all the participants, and reflects their consolidated inputs. The emphasis in the document is on actions taken, and to be taken. It advocates a move away from the ‘snatch them out’ approach, to interventions for sustained change in the situations of the poorest children. It recognizes education as a catalyst for breaking the poverty cycle for children, and offers some common characteristics of successful experiences.

Following the international workshop, UNESCO entered into a contractual arrangement with Uganda to prepare a data bank, with basic information on children in abject poverty in Kampala, and two poor rural districts. The task has been made easier as the government now houses the children who lived on the streets in a special institution. This also facilitates greater visibility of the assistance given to poor children from agencies and NGOs. A network of the participants was established to continue the dialogue. UNESCO plans to send people to the institution to obtain first-hand experience of the progress being made to assist the children, and to ensure their education.

Poverty is a complex matter, and its eradication is just as complex. Education is a key but not a panacea. Appropriate legislation must be put in place, and enforced, to protect the poor, and to enhance their economic opportunities. The rights of children must be respected, and no child should be denied basic health, nutrition, shelter, and the opportunity to complete at least its primary education. There is no excuse for failing to do this. Global efforts must be consolidated towards this end.

John Daniel
Assistant Director-General for Education
UNESCO
The international workshop marked another step forward in UNESCO’s contribution to poverty eradication through education. Participants left the workshop with a sense of purpose and renewed commitment, because of the combined efforts of the National Commission for UNESCO in Uganda, The Primary Education Section in the Basic Education Division of UNESCO, and the education staff of ISESCO. I am, indeed, grateful to Ms Ulla Kalha who, despite advanced pregnancy, organized the meeting, and later took the report through its final stages. Special thanks are due to Ms Theopahnia Chavatzia for assisting with the organization and preparations for the meeting.

My sincere appreciation goes to Ms Anastasia Nakkazi, the Secretary General of the National Commission for UNESCO in Uganda and her team, who ensured the smooth running of the workshop, and ensured the comfort of the participants.

We are indebted to Jessica Storey who prepared the official draft report, to Ms Carmela Salzano, and Mr John Allen, who edited the report, and from whom little escaped his notice.

The experience of the meeting left me with a greater resolve to pursue, without compromise, those measures and investments which will provide the poorest children with the assistance they so badly need, and which will change their lives.

Winsome Gordon
Chief,
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I.1 Global Perspectives

The global community has long recognized the need to eradicate extreme poverty. The question is how best to do it. At the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995, where abject poverty was considered a severe injustice, and an abuse of human rights, one of the most important outcomes was a commitment to poverty eradication. The Programme of Action suggested, and included, proposals to identify, and build on, livelihood systems and survival strategies used by the poor, and to ensure their participation in programmes designed in their name.

In December 1995, the United Nations General Assembly declared the period 1997-2006 the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. The theme, which recognizes that “eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind,” is intended to influence national and international development.

The need to eradicate extreme poverty was again stressed during the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000. At that time, the international community agreed to work towards poverty reduction through education. Convinced that Universal Primary Education (UPE) is central in the fight against poverty, the Forum set 2015 as the target year by which over one billion children are to:

- receive free, good quality, primary education;
- complete primary education without repetition;
- be given equal opportunities to succeed.

These goals have implications for the poorest children. Shelter, nutritious diet, health care, clothing, and free, compulsory, holistic, good quality primary education, are among their most urgent needs.

The international community recognizes the importance of Education For All in the fight against poverty. The responses of individual countries have been characterized by:

- the establishment of national poverty eradication units and departments;
- the preparation of national poverty eradication and preparation plans;
- the refocusing of official development cooperation programmes, and non-governmental organizations, on poverty eradication;
- the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, (PRSPs).

The most dramatic initiative towards poverty eradication to date was launched at the G7 Summit in Berlin, (1999). It is now conditional for Highly Indebted Countries (HICPs) to work within a
poverty reduction framework, indicating policies, actions and budgets, in order to benefit from debt relief. This move has underlined the significance of the PRSPs, or other poverty reduction strategic plans. The summit further highlighted the need for stronger and more transparent linkages between debt relief and poverty reduction, in order to ensure that debt relief will make a real difference to the lives of the world’s poor. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are now supporting an approach requiring countries to demonstrate clear progress, in order to receive their full package of debt relief.

Under the terms of the HIPC initiative, The World Bank expects that about two-thirds of total relief will go towards education and health, and that other priority areas will include HIV/AIDS, rural development and water supply. Niger, for example, plans to commit 40 per cent of its debt relief funds to education. There are about 36 other countries that may eventually qualify for HIPC assistance. A number of these are currently conflict-affected or have governance problems, which preclude the possibility of effective debt relief. It is important to note, however, that HIPC relief can contribute to progress towards human development under the right conditions.

By January 2002, only eight countries (Burkina Faso, Uganda, Mauritania, Tanzania, Bolivia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Honduras) had finalized their PRSPs and about twelve others were nearing completion. Uganda is a leader in PRSP implementation. It has already implemented reforms in health and education, and has completed progress reports on these reforms and their outcomes.

Some countries have established national offices for planning and monitoring poverty reduction policies and programmes. Senegal has developed, and is in the process of launching, a National Plan for the Development of Education. This plan includes action to achieve the objectives of universal primary education, the improved quality of primary education, and the improved management of the education system in the context of decentralization. Malawi has established a Poverty Monitoring Unit, and has set up a committee linking the Ministry of Education with sectoral ministries and NGOs. Lesotho, in its Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP), has proposed the establishment of a poverty monitoring unit to fill information gaps, to set standards for measuring poverty, to establish targets for monitoring activities, and to keep stakeholders informed.

It is too early to reach any conclusions on the overall effectiveness of the PRSP approach. There is little information available on the effectiveness of concrete implementation strategies, and how they will have an impact on the poor. Even so, PRSPs are still in their infancy in many countries. However, there is broad agreement among countries that such a country-driven approach “holds promise for improving efforts at reducing poverty, and enhancing the effectiveness of external assistance.”

Universal primary education is critical for social and economic progress. At the level of individual human development, however, the needs of the poorest children go beyond UPE, and this should be transparent in the PRSP. Such children need shelter, clothing, food and emotional support along with a wealth-oriented education. While the potential macro-impact of PRSPs can be deduced from the framework, their likely contribution to improving the situation of the

world’s poorest children was not evident in the 34 draft PRSPs reviewed by UNESCO.

This paper presents the issues raised, and options proposed, at the International Workshop on Education and Poverty Eradication: Creating an Enabling Environment for Poverty Eradication, held in Uganda in July 2000. The emphasis of the paper is on:

(a) breaking the poverty cycle for the poorest children, especially girls;

(b) how to meet challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and by natural and man-made (wars, civil conflict) disasters; and

(c) improving the effectiveness of education in poverty eradication through teacher training, cultural awareness and the development of pro-poor programmes; and

(d) establishing monitoring and evaluation systems.

I.2 The International Workshop - Setting the Stage

As part of their contribution to poverty reduction strategies, and in their bid to assist their Member States to propose strategies to attain the 2015 EFA targets for the poorest children, UNESCO and ISESCO organized the International Workshop on Education and Poverty Eradication, held in Uganda from 30 July to 3 August 2001.

The objective of this International Workshop was to provide a forum for agencies, educators, and various sectorial representatives in twenty-four countries, ten UN agencies, international and national NGOs, to exchange experiences in education and poverty eradication, and suggest a set of core actions needed to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Specifically the meeting would:

(a) bring together educators working together in poverty eradication policy, plans and programmes, and representatives of other sectors, including health and social welfare;

(b) facilitate the exchange of ideas, and explore options for giving the poorest children good quality education;

(c) identify a common core of strategies to be shared among countries, to which they can refer, when preparing or implementing their poverty eradication programmes;

(d) identify the steps and change processes needed at the primary level, to make it more responsive to the needs of the poor;

(e) help countries define more clearly and explicitly the role of education, and the needs of children, in their national efforts to eradicate poverty.

The workshop focused on evolving a strategic framework for breaking the poverty cycle for the poorest children through:

- Pro-poor policies;
- Wealth-generated approaches to education;
- Linkages of pro-poor programmes;
- Strategic monitoring and tracking systems for the poorest children.

Many of the participants were already directly, or indirectly, involved in the preparation of PRSPs or other national poverty eradication initiatives in their respective countries. As part of the follow-up to the workshop, the participants were, therefore, expected to feed the results directly into their day-to-day involvement.

I.3 Organization of the Workshop

The workshop was organized into:

a) Plenary presentations and discussions;

b) Two round-table discussions:
i) “Breaking the Poverty Cycle for Children, Particularly Girls;”
ii) “From Short to Long Term Developments – Improving the Effectiveness of Education in Poverty Eradication.”

c) Four working groups:
i) The Role of Education in Poverty Eradication;
ii) Pro-poor Policies in Education;
iii) Linkages to Assist the Poorest Children;
iv) Monitoring and Tracking the Poorest Children.

The working groups’ deliberations focused on the following areas:
a) Critical issues in education and poverty eradication;
b) Options to address such issues;
c) Advantages and disadvantages of each option, i.e. strengths and weaknesses;
d) Major cost areas;
e) Step-by-step processes required to transform different options into practice.

I.4 Recognizing the Need for Change and Progress

Apart from the technical discussions at the workshop, statements were made that demonstrated political will, a knowledge of the issues, and a commitment to change.

The workshop was formally opened by the Hon. Minister of Education and Sports for Uganda, Khiddu Makubuya, under the chairmanship of Chris Muhakanizi, the Director, Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. In his address the Minister noted that no country can succeed without educating its people, and informed the participants of the Uganda Government’s efforts in this regard. He also pointed out that the Government of Uganda is committed to eradicating poverty and, in 1997 introduced the Poverty Eradication Action plan to achieve this objective. A Poverty Action Fund (PAF) to finance priority areas has also been established. He informed the workshop that in Uganda, the policy objectives of Universal Primary Education (UPE) focus on Access, Equity, Relevance, Affordability and Equality.

He further noted that close cooperation between the Ministry of Education and other sectors is a critical requirement for poverty eradication programmes. It is, he stated, a fact that education contributes to poverty eradication by increasing people’s income, improving health and empowering all individuals, including girls, the disabled, and other marginalized or “hard-to-reach” communities and groups.

The cooperation of the Ministry of Education with other sectors was evident during the closing ceremony, when the Honourable Minister of Education was joined by the Honourable Minister of Health, Brigadier Jim Muhwezi, and the Cabinet representative of the Honourable Minister of Finance, General Sendaula. Brigadier Muhwezi underlined the role of education in realizing the goals of health for all people in Uganda. He pointed out that the Ministry of Health was restructuring its departments and programmes, “to achieve the cohesion necessary in the improvement in the performance of the sector.” He noted the new emphasis on school health, and baseline studies are being carried out in primary and secondary schools, with a view to improving the health of all children and young people.

“The Ugandan Government resolved to prioritize poverty eradication as the major focus of its sustained growth and development strategy...” This was the message of the Hon. Minister of Finance.
For him the workshop was an opportunity for Uganda to compare notes with other countries, and draw lessons from shared experiences. He assured the workshop that its recommendations would be integrated within the National Poverty Eradication Action Plans (PEAP), and other government policies to create an enabling environment for poverty eradication. Already in Uganda targeted interventions included the education of girls, people with disabilities, and orphans.

Ms Anastasia Nakkazi, the Secretary General of the Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO, welcomed the participants, and urged them to exchange ideas and evolve strategies for combating poverty in all its manifestations.

The ISESCO Representative, Mariama Niang, in her address, stressed the need for education to be at the service of society in order to eradicate poverty. She informed the participants that ISESCO had made a number of interventions, using education based on Islamic principles, in its member countries. It had addressed the plight of girls, women, refugees, urban poverty, child labour, street children, and beggars among others. She urged participants to mobilize opinion against child slavery, which is a consequence of poverty.

Christopher Liundi, the UNESCO Representative in Rwanda, addressed the opening session, on behalf of UNESCO. He highlighted the fact that poverty eradication is at the top of UNESCO’s agenda in this millennium. He observed that, in spite of the fact that we are approaching five years in the Decade of Poverty Eradication, many countries have yet to collect facts and figures on the status of their poverty eradication efforts. He raised questions about the tools that should be used, and how they should be used to eradicate poverty. Finally, he pointed out that education is an important part of the poverty eradication process, and urged the workshop to focus its discussions on the eradication of poverty for the poorest children aged from 0-13.

The UNICEF Representative emphasized the importance of girls’ and women’s education in the eradication of poverty and, therefore, urged the workshop to pay particular attention to the issues faced by girls. She also advised of the need to listen, and be guided by the children’s views and positions on poverty eradication, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. She stressed that girls’ education is the best investment the African continent can make.

The UNDP Representative, Dr. Ngila Mwase, the Officer-in-Charge, observed that illiteracy is still a major challenge to poverty reduction strategies and that, therefore, education issues should be discussed in PRSPs. He noted that Uganda has lessons to offer on what works, and what does not. The global target for the eradication of poverty is 2015, while that of Uganda is reducing poverty to 10 per cent by 2017. Between 1993 and 1998 Uganda reduced poverty from 52 per cent to 35 per cent. He also stated that there is a need to reorient the school curriculum to the needs of society. The UNDP Representative further stated that the eradication of absolute poverty was dependent on education for all. “Primary education for all is essential”, he continued, [as]... it develops some of the most basic capabilities for human development, and creates a base of numeracy and literacy that enables people to be more innovative and productive.” He suggested that development should focus on the following six areas:

i) The privatization of economies in ways that promote the participation of the poor.

ii) Planning to guide career development and curriculum development.

iii) Emphasis on rational population policies.

iv) Regional cooperation and integra-
v) Infusion of global goals and targets in national policies.
vi) Monitoring of poverty reduction activities.

The Representative of the Civil Society Organizations, drawing on the experience of the poorest districts of Kotido and Moroto, observed that despite free education and books, parents were still unable to meet the indirect costs of education, resulting in high dropout rates. He observed that girls are worse off, and therefore stressed the need to focus on girls’ education, and advocated incentives for girls to go to school. He further advised that the curriculum should accommodate the needs of the community, and enable the poorest children to learn to protect themselves from diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS. In these processes, the teacher’s role must be that of a facilitator.

The Chairman of the opening session posed provoking questions, aimed at getting the participants to think about how to escape from poverty through education, given their own experiences, and the experiences of many Asian countries that were able to address the poorest groups, in spite of low per capita incomes.
Chapter II

What We Know about the Poorest Children

“To persist and not deviate from the path towards breaking the poverty cycle”

Gandhi

A common problem in efforts to deal with the symptoms of poverty is related to the identification of the target group. A programme that expects any degree of success, must be able to locate and identify the relevant target groups, and design suitable strategies for addressing their needs.

The following is a list of those groups considered to be among the poorest children:

- Street children
- Orphans
- Children affected by HIV/AIDS – this includes children who have the disease themselves, or who live with its effects. Millions of school-age children have become orphans, and/or have become the primary carers of younger siblings, or infected family members, so they drop out of school.
- Children living in post crisis situations – this includes children in conflict zones, in refugee camps, children who have been displaced following the destruction of their physical environment.
- Children that work – poor children may have to work to help support their families and themselves.
- Children who live in urban slums.
- Ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.
- Children in rural, remote, nomadic or migrant communities – these children often lack physical access to education.
- Physically challenged children – there is often a lack of suitable resources and facilities; teachers are not trained to deal with the special needs of these children; when the necessary physical, emotional or intellectual support is not provided, these children are kept out of the education system.
- Children from households that cannot afford to provide their basic needs.
- Children in prisons and asylums

II.1 The Gifts of the Poorest Children

It is important to identify the talents and skills of children within the target group, so that appropriate interventions can be designed. Of the many assets identified, it was agreed that children:

- Are resourceful and resilient, and have learned how to survive on very little.
- Are streetwise and without realizing it, have learned how to learn. Mis-
takes can have serious consequences, so they learn the rules of survival quickly.

- Have acquired foreign language vocabularies comprising essential words. For example, many children who beg for money from tourists have learned the language of the tourists and, furthermore, know how to play on their sympathies by indicating that they are hungry.
- Have learned that persistence pays off.
- Have mastered basic curriculum concepts, in arithmetic, science and social studies, through their life experiences.
- Have livelihood experiences, at a younger age, than their richer counterparts. Some of them have to take on adult responsibilities, such as caring for other family members. Some may have been involved in informal trade before they are of school age, selling fruit or sweets for their parents.
- Have acquired traditional skills - even very young children may already have learned some traditional skills from their parents, or from other community members.

II.2 The Needs of the Poorest Children

All children have needs that go beyond learning standard curriculum concepts, such as reading, writing and numeracy. For the poorest, however, meeting these other needs is critical if they are to succeed in the school system. These include:

Physical needs

The basic needs of food, health care, shelter and clothing, should be dealt with first. Education is hampered by health issues such as malnutrition, sanitation, illness and, the lack of proper health care. Poor children are often malnourished, either because they simply do not get enough food, or because their diet is not varied enough to provide all the essential nutrients. Hungry, malnourished children cannot concentrate, and are more prone to different diseases. Malaria, which is particularly prevalent in Africa, contributes to reduced school attendance, and ultimately poor achievement. The poorest children may also lack appropriate shelter and clothing. They may be homeless, or there may be no space, or time, at home for homework.

Cognitive needs

Lacking cognitive stimulation in the early years, poor children often lag behind their peers in academic achievement, and particularly with regard to language development. The language of the school is likely to be different from that of the mother tongue, which only serves to compound the problem.

Most children learn more by being actively involved in the teaching and learning processes. But, this is particularly important for the poorest children, who must grapple with a variety of new experiences and concepts in school. Education programmes that are intended to create equal opportunities for all children must draw on the life experiences of all children. That is, concrete experiences should be drawn from the lifestyle of children with different backgrounds. The poorest child might not have a television at home, but she, or he, is likely to be familiar with traditional stories. She, or he, may not have piped water where she, or he, lives but she or he would know the difference between “clean and dirty water.” Remedial work and the achievement of competences in all areas of the curriculum, must be an integral part of the education process.
Social and emotional needs

The poorest children need to build their confidence, to feel that they can achieve in school, and in the wider world. If they do not believe they can do well at school, they might not try. They need to learn:

(a) how to develop and maintain social relationships, and how to manage conflicts and differences. Some of these children have grown up in an environment where aggression is necessary for survival,

(b) how to channel this aggression into appropriate activities like music or sports. They also need to learn positive attitudes and values, and

(c) positive attitudes and values fostered in a caring and secure learning environment. With the increasing incidence of social problems and civil unrest, it has become imperative that children learn positive values and attitudes, such as cooperation, responsibility, pride in a job well done, and love of success. The poorest children often do not receive the kind of emotional support they need from their homes. In many cases, there is too little parental (or other adult) support and guidance. Hence, the education system should take greater responsibility for their upbringing, if they are to learn how to function well in society.

School attendance needs

School attendance needs include school fees, books, uniforms, and transportation. It is important to note that even when school fees are abolished, there are other related costs such as those for books, uniforms, transportation, and lunch, which poor children can ill afford. Free education for the poorest children requires that all these needs be met within the provision of education.

II.3 Characteristics of Successful Interventions

Various countries and organizations have responded to the need to develop strategies in education for poverty eradication. These efforts have, however, shown few substantive results. In many cases, a number of causes can be identified, including poor targeting, lack of sustainability, irrelevance of the programme, a lack of commitment to the poor, and initiatives that are too small to make a difference. However, in spite of general inadequacies, there have been some successes.

Countries need to look at what has worked for others, and learn from these examples. A review of successful poverty eradication initiatives showed some common characteristics.

Successful pro-poor programmes:

- identify the poorest children and understand their needs – there is coherence between the education programmes and the children's needs.
- are holistic – they consider all aspects of education.
- are developed and implemented at the local level with community participation.
- have committed managers and teachers, often NGOs or religious groups.
- take the affective domain into account – providing a caring and supportive environment is important.
- teach and value traditional trades and skills – programme content is adapted to the local environment, while maintaining national curriculum standards.
- acknowledge and build on the skills and knowledge of the children themselves.
- are appropriately evaluated, and are characterized by indicators that assess the programme's success in reaching the poorest children.
II.4 Barriers to Change in Education Systems

We are now in the year 2002, and it is becoming increasingly obvious that at the current rate of progress, many countries will not be able to meet the 2015 UPE targets. Oxfam blames this lack of progress on governments, on states that invest more in arms than in education and health, or fail to control corruption. It also blames rich countries that do not look beyond their own short-term interests.

Among the barriers that hinder progress within education systems, the following are the most important:

- Rigidity of systems. Certain people benefit from the status quo, and are resistant to change. Others are unable to see the possibilities for change, or lack the commitment, courage or energy needed.
- Governments, or local leaders, who are generally not held accountable for how much money is spent, and how education systems are managed.
- Sufficiency attitude – what is provided for the poor is good enough.
- Inadequate pro-poor infrastructure or support systems – this makes it difficult to implement successful poverty eradication interventions.
- A lack of systematic tracking of pro-poor interventions – in this way it is extremely difficult to know if the activities and programmes implemented have had any impact at all.
“Poverty begets poverty. The world’s poorest people are those who, while they were children, were excluded from opportunities to break out of the cycle of poverty. Similarly, children who are today denied the opportunity to break out of poverty will be tomorrow’s victims of the vicious cycle.”

Patrick Sikana, OXFAM

III.1 What shape should pro-poor policies take?

Education policies that address issues for all children do not reach the poorest children, primarily because they are not in school, or rarely attend school. Policies, therefore, extend their reach into society as a whole, and facilitate the meeting of the most urgent needs at the micro level. However, successful policies will depend on harnessing all resources and capacities to find the poorest children, including religious bodies, private sector companies, NGOs, the police force, and the military.

Education should be seen as a powerful catalyst for change, as a tool for poverty eradication. It provides the vision to see clearly what is involved in poverty eradication, the voice to say what is required, and the skills and energy to take action.

Assisting the poorest children is an interministerial concern, and the planning, programming and implementation of appropriate programmes should be coordinated at the national level, and converge at the level of the children. Responsible parenthood must be an integral part of policies to address the needs of the poorest children. There should be sanctions for parents who continue to have children, but cannot take care of them. This is a hard choice for the state to make.

There should be clear, reinforced regulatory policies that address resource allocation for the poorest children, public accountability, measurable access to health, education and social services, and opportunities for communication with the public. In crises, the welfare of the poorest children should be a priority. The pressing example is the HIV/AIDS pandemic that exacerbates the plight of the poorest children.

Investments to help the poor must move away from the current approach, which is based on a principle of “snatch them out”, which does not pay attention to how to sustain people out of poverty (OXFAM). The poor should be seen as assets who can contribute to development, and not as objects of charity.
III.2 Appropriate Strategies

Identifying and locating the target groups

- The names, period and date of birth, and addresses of all the children must be in a national data bank, linked to data centres at all administrative levels. Communities, local governments and councils must have a roster of the poorest children in their respective areas.

- A physical map of the location of the children should be prepared, accompanied by a booklet that provides baseline information about the children.

- Along with the identification of the children should be efforts to ensure the physical welfare of the children. This can take a multiplicity of forms according to the children's situation.

- Homeless children. Shelter has to be provided for them. The interim step should be to clear space, and construct places for them, where they can sleep in safety, and where they can have at least two warm meals per day. These buildings should be constructed by the communities, with the help of the local government. They need full support to go to school, and the “home” needs a mother and a father.

- Households headed by children. All their addresses must be known, the size of each family, and the number of school-age children. The children should be assisted to attend school like other children. They should be given additional assistance to produce their own food, if they have the available land. In short they should be assisted to maintain their independence.

- Children in care or in orphanages. All these children should be given uniforms, books, fares, etc., to go to school. The orphanages should be required to provide records of attendance, and the performance of all school-age children. The Ministry of Health should ensure at least an annual visit to the orphanages, and seek assistance to give the children vitamins and minerals. Sports, games and skills training should be an integral part of their upbringing. The country should recognize its role in giving succour to such children.

- Children with their parents or substitute families - negotiations and discussions with parents to enrol the children in the nearest school. These children should be given uniforms, soft shoes (so that they do not look different in school from the other children), books, and breakfast and lunch at school. The schooling of children who are gainfully employed, should be planned with the schools, and with those who employ them. It should be mandatory for them to go to school. In situations where the girls are household maids, they should be removed and put in orphanages.

Advocacy

The government of the country must take a leading role. This means that the Head of State must lead national advocacy efforts in support of the poorest children. The entertainment industry should use its potential for reaching the hearts of the people. Religious groups would need to reinforce the awareness campaign with messages of love, care, and responsibility.

Free education

Education must remain free for these children throughout their school lives, and this must be made very clear to head teachers of the schools that they attend.
Quality of education

The poorest children are likely to need teaching for longer hours, yet these are the children who in reality will have less time for education. A trade-off will be needed if they are to achieve as well as their counterparts. Guidance and counselling will be imperative for them, as they need emotional support to build their self-confidence, and to feel a sense of security in school.

The content of the curriculum has to be delivered in a learning environment that is meaningful for the children. They need to cover the common curriculum in their geographical area, as they need to compete with other children in society. Yet the lessons must be interpreted, and made relevant to their life experiences, in order to enhance their learning opportunities. This will not happen by chance, teachers will need training to help these children.

Teacher orientation and training to teach the poorest children

Teachers must act as agents of social change, and should be led to understand this role in their training. Teachers need to know and accept them, and their differences, and be committed to make school experiences beneficial for them. Their confidence and belief in the children can go a long way towards improving their achievement.

Partnerships

Children themselves should be the main partners in any plans to help them. This approach has the advantage of bringing assistance closer to them, and ensuring that their priorities are met. It also raises the opportunities for community members to participate actively in the care of children.

Resources

The government cannot manage this huge task by itself. It is the responsibility of every citizen. The example should be set by the national budget, through the allocation of sufficient resources to tackle the main issues affecting youth.

At government level, all external aid should provide two per cent for the poorest children. This money should be utilized for direct assistance activities.

Institutionalizing assistance for the poorest children

Another challenge for the government is the management of this assistance. While a department for the poorest children should be established in the Office of the Head of State, the local government authority, and the members of parliament, should be held responsible for the children in their designated areas.

NGOs, interest groups, and religious bodies wishing to participate in the programme, should be duly registered, have an approved programme, and provide quarterly reports on their progress with the children, identifying each child by name, age and address.

Formative evaluation should be an integral part of programme development and implementation. Feedback into the processes will help to focus programmes on priority areas.

For the poverty cycle to be broken:

- Issues must dealt with such as the inability to identify, access and use available resources, and the fact that poverty will be passed on from one generation to the next, if it is not addressed appropriately, effectively and efficiently.

- There must be a move away from the current style of interventions, based on the principle of “snatch them out”, which does not pay attention to how
to sustain people out of poverty. The poor should be seen as assets who can contribute to development, and not as objects of charity, or as people who need to be “snatched out” of poverty. Such initiatives usually do not have the desired impact, because the requisite policy environment has not been adequately created.

- Education must be seen as a powerful catalyst for change, as a tool for poverty eradication. It provides the vision to see clearly what is involved in poverty eradication, the voice to say what is required, and the skills and energy to take appropriate action. It should be seen as a means of building awareness and positive mind-sets, and as a tool for capacity building. Girls’ capacity in self-assertion needs to be built, for example, so that they are empowered to demand, and to use, services.

- There must be a focus on changing education policies, particularly those pertaining to girls. Policies and practices that require change include those that inhibit access to education, such as school fees and uniform requirements, and those that discriminate on the basis of gender, such as the permanent exclusion of girls from school when they become pregnant. Zambia and Burkina Faso, for example, now allow young mothers to remain at school.

Strategies proposed for breaking the poverty cycle include:

- Positive policy and practice changes. Currently, policy changes are not always followed by changes in practice. For instance, in Zambia, fees were abolished, but six months later some schools were still charging fees.

- Awareness building, and a shift towards the belief that the poor can change their situation.

- Capacity building for action. Existing curricula should be adapted, so as to equip learners to fight poverty more effectively. They should provide not only the basic literacy, numeracy and problem-solving competencies, but also a realistic foundation in economically relevant skills – wealth oriented concepts, values and skills.

If strategies that respond to the needs of the poorest children are to be developed, a number of themes must be considered:

- The structure of the system. National education systems must include all providers of education, for example, Koranic schools.

- The approach of the system: the languages used, gender equity, etc. There must be a balance between the education of boys and girls.

- Support of the system: school-feeding programme, guidance, counselling, etc., are all vital for meeting the needs of the poorest children.

- Partnerships.

- Focus on the poorest children.

- Monitoring of the system’s performance.

- The impact of HIV/AIDS on child poverty.

III.3 Examples of success stories

During the workshop, participants shared their experiences of various pro-poor initiatives. These were discussed in small groups, and during the plenary sessions. Participants welcomed the experiences shared, but held reservations about their transferability. It was felt that the financial grant programmes could make a difference, but would not be sustainable in African countries. The community development approach was seen as one that
could be more responsive to the growing numbers of poor children, particularly in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Niger

Niger has put in place a three-year educational development plan to address the plight of the poorest children, encouraging them to attend school, and to improve their learning achievements. Niger also intends to commit 40 per cent of its HIPC debt relief funds to education, and to double the enrolment of girls from about 37 per cent to 68 per cent. However, the question still remains: how to make programmes aimed at addressing the problem of the poorest children sustainable?

Nigeria • Kano State School Feeding

The state government decided to introduce afternoon meals for primary school pupils in April 2001. This decision was taken in response to low enrolment and attendance, and poor academic achievement among the poorest population groups. Nearly one million meals are provided every day. The programme is jointly financed by the state and local governments and the community, on a 2:2:1 basis. According to reports, the

Burkina Faso • MATTE Centre

The success of the MATTE Centre in Burkina Faso exemplifies the results of a village-based approach to combat poverty through education. The provincial authorities gave one hectare of land to the Matte women for the construction of a learning and resource centre. The women identified their needs, and UNESCO contributed to the training of village trainers in reproductive health, sanitary and nutritional hygiene, participatory and community approach techniques, stimulating and managing income activities, the utilization of learning circles, integrating literacy and post literacy, and the promotion of literacy in Moore, the local language. UNESCO also assisted the community with the construction of a mill unit, and a production workshop with two separate work areas and one shed, a multi-purpose training room, a primary health centre and straw house, used as a space for childcare and meetings. The Centre is a meeting place for women and girls. Through an integrated and participatory approach, the Centre has provided training for women, and has increased girls’ access to education. Women learn how to use local and traditional medicine to improve health care for their families. A grinding mill was provided to save women walking long distances. A significant feature is that each woman taking part in the non-formal education programme at the Centre, is encouraged to bring three girls, thus accelerating the education of girls in the community.

The Centre addresses the following areas in the education of girls and women: (a) understanding one’s environment, (b) transforming and improving one’s environment, (c) how to be autonomous, and (d) learning to foresee the future. After one year of operation, the production of the Centre included: soumbala (mimosa grains), shea butter, shea based soap, peanut cream, millet flour, maize flour, and vegetables. With the assistance of the men in the village, they have been able to market their goods. The Matte experience could be transferred to many other African villages.
feeding programme has already contributed to improved enrolment and attendance rates.

Lesotho • Free Primary Education

Lesotho commissioned a Poverty Assessment Survey in 1999, following consistently declining net enrolment and intake rates, to levels of 29.8 per cent and 51.4 per cent respectively. The survey revealed that the lowered access to primary education was a result of parents' inability to meet the school needs of their children. The government responded by introducing free primary education, to be phased in one grade per year, in combination with efforts to meet other teaching and learning needs. For example, new schools are being built where needed (46 were built in 2000/2001), and teacher training and school feeding programmes expanded.

Lesotho adopted strategies that benefit the local community. For example, the school feeding programme employs unemployed women in the community, who are paid by the Ministry of Education, to supply, prepare, and serve food to students in their own communities. A targeted equity-based programme, which gives scholarships to the poorest children, was also introduced. Despite a number of problems, including low efficiency and inadequate monitoring, access to education increased in the first year (2000), with net enrolment rising from 51 to 69 per cent.

Ghana • Special Programmes

Ghana has adopted a strategy of decentralization to the district level. The poorest children, who are more easily identified in this way, are given uniforms and school bags. Ghana has also set up camps for girls, to increase their love of mathematics, science and technology, and to teach them to succeed in non-traditional roles. Girls are encouraged to apply their knowledge to change the way things are done. Together with Action Aid, the government of Ghana has also introduced a programme that takes education to where the children are.

Bangladesh • Girls' Scholarship Programme

To reach girls, Bangladesh established a scholarship programme in which money was given to the girls themselves, through commercial banks, to pay for their education. This programme succeeded in reaching over one million girls.

India • Bodh Shiksha Samiti

This is an example of a community-based programme designed to increase the value placed on education, and encourage further study within the formal system. Based in a slum area of Jaipur, the programme was created in the late 1980s, to provide “affordable, flexible, welcoming” access to schools, where previously none was available. The students, parents, teachers and programme organizers worked together to deal with many of the barriers to the inclusion of socially marginalized children. It is holistic, including early childhood education, and adult literacy programmes, and the primary curriculum includes coverage of basic issues, such as hygiene and nutrition, as well as general skills training in mathematics, languages, reasoning and attitude development (independence, cooperation, etc.). Teachers are continually trained in participatory teaching methods. Aspects of formal schooling are eventually introduced, such as textbooks and written examinations, so that students are prepared to enter the formal school system if they wish.1

Malawi • Girls’ Education

In 1991, Malawi introduced the Girls’ Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project. Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the project waived school fees for girls (but not for boys at the beginning), who managed not to repeat classes in primary school. The project also involved the creation of a new “gender sensitive” curriculum, the building of new classrooms, the recruitment and training of more teachers, the introduction of new policies allowing children to attend school without uni-

Brazil • The School-grant Programme (Bolsa Escola)

This programme was introduced by the Federal Government of Brazil, as a result of the experience of the mayor of Campinas, a city 120 km from Sao Paulo. He started a Minimum Income Guarantee Programme, that provided a monthly allowance for mothers in exchange for them keeping their children in school. The programme was instituted by law 10219 in April 2001, and now reaches about 44,382 children in 22,493 families.

The programme:
- raises the likelihood of children completing school, and reducing the possibility of future poverty
- reduces child-labour, the number of children on the street, so that poor children are less vulnerable to drugs, prostitution and criminal activities
- improves the economic conditions, and hence the quality of life of the poorest children, and protects the poorest families from further degradation as a result of social, physical, and economic disorder

The government plans to invest US$730 million annually to reach 5.8 million families living below the poverty line. The grant is US$6 for each child, with a maximum of US$18 per family. Regulations require that each child is registered in primary school, and attends 85 per cent of the time. The card for withdrawing money is given to the mothers, because the results of a socio-economic opinion poll showed that mothers were more effective than fathers in optimizing the benefits of support.

The results of an evaluation of the programme undertaken with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF and The World Bank showed:
- reduction in repetition and dropout rates
- more stimulated and motivated children
- reduction in child labour
- improved quality of life and the esteem of the family
- improved value for the role of women in the family
- reduction in migration
- reduction of violence
- improved understanding of citizenship and solidarity

Brazil aims at making the programme the world’s greatest in helping poor children to receive an education.
forms, and allowing pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth, and a social mobilization campaign encouraging parents to send their girls to school. The project has achieved a large measure of success. Girls’ enrolments in primary education almost doubled, from 772,000 to over 1.5 million between 1991 and 1996, and the number of girls, as an overall percentage of enrolments, rose from 45 per cent to 47 per cent. The sharp increase in demand overwhelmed the education system, and improvements in quality lagged behind those in quantity. The government will continue to work on strategies to improve the quality and efficiency of primary education.¹

**Uganda • Universal Primary Education**

The government of Uganda introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, in recognition of the role of education in poverty eradication. This programme abolished school fees for four children in every family, including orphaned and disabled children. The resulting increase in students enrolled in primary education has been dramatic – the figures rose from 2.3 million in 1997, to 6.5 million in 2000.² The challenge now is to ensure quality. The sudden expansion of the system resulted in much larger classes, and although there was an increase in the number of teachers, it was not enough to meet the needs. Uganda is trying to improve the quality of its teachers through in-service workshops.

**ISESCO**

ISESCO provided another example of using different strategies to meet different needs. They operate literacy classes using the harmonized Arabic alphabet, which has resulted in the patronage of schools, and linkages between production and the new-literate.


Chapter IV

Meeting the challenges of poverty eradication

IV.1 The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is causing extreme difficulties for countries in their attempts to meet their poverty reduction targets and development goals, and is undermining education systems in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Because of the time lag between HIV infection and full-blown AIDS, the impact of the virus is likely to be even more severe in the coming decade than in previous years. High levels of HIV infection in the 1990s in many countries, for example Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, will lead to high rates of AIDS-related diseases and mortality.

It is crucial that the impact of the pandemic on child poverty be taken into consideration. How can countries hope to reduce the incidence of poverty, when up to a quarter of households are living with AIDS? How can they expect to educate their children when AIDS is putting increasing strains on the education system, and on families? How can they expect to maintain labour productivity, and supply and economic growth, when HIV/AIDS is depriving families, communities, and entire nations, of their young and most productive members?

Some countries, such as Uganda, have made great strides in reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The rate has been falling steadily for years, and is now at about 8 per cent, with the decline being most noticeable in the 15-29 age group. Such success was due in part to an aggressive public health campaign, emphasizing the ways in which HIV can be transmitted, its fatal consequences, ways to prevent infection, and support and care for AIDS victims. The Ministry of Education recognizes the scope in the education system for informing and promoting positive responses to HIV/AIDS in young people, and is looking for ways to strengthen the education sector’s future role in addressing the problem. Unfortunately, Uganda is an exception. In many more countries HIV continues to spread rapidly, and its impact is devastating.

Effects on the Demand for Education

Households affected by AIDS have fewer resources available for schooling. When breadwinners die, new poor are created. Often children can no longer afford school fees, uniforms, books, lunch, and other related schooling costs. A study in Zambia showed that in families where the father died, monthly disposable income fell by more than 80 per cent.¹ Children may be taken out of school to work in order to make up for lost income. Girls, in particular, may have to stay at home to care for sick family members or

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¹ UNDP paper, p. 10.
younger siblings. Children who have lost one, or both parents, but are still in school, are likely to reduce school attendance and achievement. They often lack adult guidance, and the material and psychological support needed, to achieve academically. Children who are themselves HIV positive are prone to frequent illnesses, which cause them to be absent from school for much of the year.

Effects on the Supply of Education

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has a negative impact on the production sector, and leads to a shortage of both trained and untrained (volunteer) teachers, administrators and education management personnel. Death rates in Botswana among primary school teachers rose from 0.7 per 1,000 in 1994 to 7.1 in 1999. It takes time to replace such losses. In Zambia for example, there are not enough teachers in the training colleges to replace those lost to AIDS. The private sector may compound this problem by “stealing” teachers to replace their own losses (UNDP). HIV/AIDS affected employees are absent more often due to illness, and when they are present, they tend to be less productive than they would otherwise have been.

Effects on Programmes

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS demands its inclusion in the school curriculum. HIV/AIDS education needs to be integrated throughout the curriculum, beginning at the primary level. Primary school is not too early to start AIDS awareness training, if the information is tailored to the age of the children. Children must be exposed to HIV/AIDS prevention education before they start to engage in high-risk behaviour. It may also be necessary to incorporate more vocational and income-generating training into the curriculum, to help the increased number of children who have to leave school before completion. High-prevalence countries need increased support for the education sector. In developing countries, the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by donors, governments, communities, parents and civil society organizations, has been inadequate to date.

Effects on Education Planning

HIV/AIDS also has implications for education planning. New knowledge and skills are needed to understand the full impact of the epidemic on the education sector, and to respond appropriately. Creative measures will have to be taken to maintain the number and skills of education staff. Retired teachers can be brought back into service, more focus can be put on in-service training, and community knowledge and skills can be drawn upon more extensively. Comprehensive measures must be taken to sustain access to education for children in households affected by AIDS. Schooling costs should be reduced or eliminated, and support of all kinds, including psychological and social support, should be provided to such children.

The education sector can be used to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic, limit its spread, and mitigate its effects. The incidence of HIV is often very low among 5-14 year olds, but much higher among 15-19 year olds, and even higher for those in their twenties and thirties. The education sector can be used to disseminate information about the disease, and the consequences of high-risk activities such as unprotected sex, in the hope that the up-and-coming generation will change its behaviour, and the incidence of HIV/AIDS will decline.
IV.2 Wars, Civil Disturbances and Natural Disasters

In planning, implementing or reviewing education policies, the impact of wars, civil disturbances and natural disasters cannot be ignored. Poverty is generated every day as a result of such events. There were numerous wars and civil conflicts throughout the 1990s, including the Gulf War, the genocide in Rwanda, civil conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Angola, and the violence in many areas has not yet come to an end. Many countries have suffered horrendous natural disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch in Central America, and earthquakes in Turkey. Wars and civil conflicts can hamper or disable education systems, and natural disasters often destroy a locality’s infrastructure, buildings, etc. These are facts of life for people who live in earthquake, hurricane or tornado zones for example. Education planning must include contingencies for these emergency situations. What would happen if disaster struck? How will the country deal with the destruction of education systems, infrastructure and programmes, and the trauma suffered by children, teachers and families in an emergency situation?

Education must be a priority in emergency situations, and should be included in the first wave of humanitarian assistance. Many “emergency” situations last for years, and this should be the assumption at the outset in educational planning. Attending school is one of the first ways in which traumatized children can regain a sense of normalcy and stability in their lives. School gives shape and continuity to the daily lives of children, and can be a “haven of security” for them. It can be used to help maintain cultural identities, as well as give hope to children.

Informal education and recreational activities are as important as academic learning. They can provide a structure and daily routine for children’s lives, before the educational infrastructure has been rehabilitated. Information about lifeskills, health, safety, HIV/AIDS, etc., can be disseminated through informal education. In addition, the integration of children affected by conflict, for example ex-child combatants, children who have lost limbs, and victims of sexual violence, may help them to recover from the effects of the conflict.

Refugees

It is impossible to have an idea of actual numbers, but estimates put the number of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and refugees at about 50 million, which is close to one per cent of the world’s population.

Governments in asylum countries are required by international law to promote access to education for refugee children in the country of asylum. In refugee camps, people often do not wait for international aid, and may begin to improvise schooling within a few weeks of arrival. This is followed, in most cases, by intervention on the part of NGOs or the government of the asylum country, which typically provide materials, and take on leadership roles in the community-based schools, or in the operation of education systems for refugees. In Guinea, for example, teachers from within the refugee populations from Liberia and Sierra Leone developed a curriculum and started a school programme themselves. After receiving aid from UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee, the number of students rose to over 75,000.2

In spite of the availability of education in the camps, many children in refugee camps do not have access to it. Some may actually be closer to schools

than they were in their homes, but there are many barriers that limit access, some of which are the same as those faced by children in their homes:

- There may be cultural practices that limit girls’ enrolment. At home and in the refugee camps, girls may be expected to take on responsibility for younger siblings, or help out at home in other ways.
- The schooling itself is potentially of poor quality, and may only be available for the youngest children.
- The host government may be reluctant to allow the immediate establishment of education programmes, for fear that refugee families may thus be encouraged to remain in the country.

Curriculum, certification, and the use of “refugee” teachers, pose specific problems. If the curriculum is not that of the home country, it may not be relevant for the children, and they may have trouble fitting back into their own education system later on. “Education for repatriation” means that the curriculum is the home country curriculum. In cases where the “emergency” is expected to continue for years, as is often the case, education systems may be set up to “face both ways” by, for example, including the language of the host country in its curriculum, so students may continue beyond the basic schooling provided in refugee camps, and by attending public host country schools. The certification of studies is problematic as well. Will the child be certificated by the home or the host country? The issue of teachers can pose problems as well. Many camps use refugee teachers, whereby educated refugees take on teaching roles. This calls for intensive in-service training, as many were not trained as teachers, and they need to be sensitized to the psycho-social aspects of teaching traumatized children.

In emergency situations, the issue of girls’ education requires special attention. Many of the barriers that existed at home exist in emergencies as well – home duties, no money, withdrawal from school at puberty, etc. Strategies must be developed to encourage girls’ participation in schooling in refugee camps, (though these can also be applied in home country situations).

Internally Displaced Persons

Children in crisis areas in their own counties face different barriers to education. In such cases, responsibility for schooling remains with national and local education authorities, which may be functioning poorly, or not at all. The children may lack proper identification documents to enrol in government schools, may be unable to afford the costs of attending, or may not be considered residents of the area. For countries or regions in chronic conflict, the problem is compounded.

There have been efforts by governments and the international community to maintain children’s access to schooling in conflict situations. In Sudan, Operation Lifeline Sudan, in southern Sudan, supported by various agencies, under the leadership of UNICEF, tried to ensure a supply of educational materials, prepared teachers’ guides, and assisted in teacher training. The World Food Programme (WFP) has helped to maintain education systems in emergency situations. In Mozambique, for example, a school-feeding programme, mostly in boarding schools, ensured that at least a minimum of education was maintained during the period of emergency and conflict. In the Sudan, the WFP has provided communities, especially the women, with emergency food aid during the rehabilitation of schools damaged by floods.
Early Childhood Development Programmes in Emergency Situations

When young children have been displaced and traumatized, either by natural or man-made disasters, they need special support to deal with their traumas, either endured or witnessed. Parents in such situations are usually unable to provide the care, emotional support, and attention that would otherwise be given. Children do better in school when they have received appropriate stimulation to their cognitive and psychosocial development. Early childhood development programmes tend to benefit older girls, by freeing them from childcare duties so they can go to school. This is true in non-emergency situations as well, but it is even more critical when conflict, and/or displacement, have disrupted extended family structures. Such programmes also allow nutrition and health programmes to reach the very young child, and can promote tolerance, cooperation and an understanding of peace.

Communities have tended to respond favourably to early childhood initiatives made by NGOs, but need training and start-up materials, so that parents can organize and sustain early childhood programmes, when external support is withdrawn or reduced.

Adolescents

In many conflict situations young girls and boys have been used as soldiers, or carry out various tasks related to the conflict. Others have been physically or mentally maimed by conflict or disasters. These young people would have lost opportunities for education and training, and therefore the potential to earn a reasonable livelihood. In such situations young people are vulnerable, becoming prime targets for prostitution, or greater exposure to the risks of HIV/AIDS. For drug dealers, these young victims may also see the drug trade as a way out of poverty, despite the risk of being caught and sent to prison.

A programme for poverty eradication must quickly identify these children, and organize support groups for them among the community members in their respective communities. The objective would be to reorient their minds towards working to help themselves, and to reconcile the injustices that they might have experienced. In this context the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Youth and Sports and Social Welfare, should identify the respective communities, and provide a convergence of services for providing support for the affected young people.

IV.3 Girls’ Education

Promoting the education of girls can make a significant contribution to the eradication of poverty. Two thirds of the poorest people are women and their children, and two thirds of children not in school are girls. Increasing the participation of girls in education systems can bring gains in economic development, community health, and national welfare. The more education a girl receives, the more productive she is, the better her health, and the better equipped she is to participate in the economy and in society. Girls who are not educated grow up to be women who lack the skills and education to break out of the poverty cycle.

Girls are denied access to education because of discriminatory policies, cultural suppression, and family situations. To increase the number of girls going to school:

- Education policies need to be designed to be more sensitive to the needs of girls.
Laws must be enacted to protect girl's rights to education, e.g. laws stating that girls cannot be expelled from school if they become pregnant, or that they cannot be forced into marriage.

There is a need to create awareness in teachers and teacher trainers about policies concerning girls' education. The awareness programmes could take the form of seminars, workshops, or refresher courses.

Teachers who abuse their authority, and engage in sexual relations with students, must be disciplined. This cannot be allowed.

In many families, girls are expected to help their mothers in the home, running errands or caring for younger siblings. The creation of more early childhood education programmes would free girls, young mothers and young carers, to attend school.

There are sometimes cultural practices that keep girls out of school, or that place less value on their education than on that of boys. Awareness campaigns and advocacy programmes, such as those started by FAWE (The Forum for African Women Educationalists), targeted at policy makers, communities, and the media, can help increase the participation rates of girls.

Financial aid policies need to target women, or even the girls themselves, as, for example, in Bangladesh. This is the best way to ensure that the money actually gets to the girls themselves. Education can reach more girls if the education sector collaborates with women. If a woman is educated herself, she is more likely to value education for her daughters.

Girls must be given priority in awareness-raising campaigns. There is a need to change the perceptions of girls towards sciences, technology and mathematics. Ghana has established programmes that expose girls to technology, and encourage them to opt for science courses in higher education. Those who do not make it to university attend camps, where they learn about these subjects.

IV.4 The school as a source of essential information

Schools can become the hub of a community. They can be used as centres of essential information for the community as a whole, and not just for children. There should be interaction between the education system and the community. Education systems need an enabling environment if they are to be sustained. The introduction of libraries or reading kiosks, which can be used by students as well as other community members, help to create such a learning environment. The school can be used as a community centre, to be used not only for academic learning, but also as a place for community activities and meetings, and extra-curricular activities for children. It could take on specific projects concerning relevant issues such as health, nutrition or childcare. Primary school education, as well as that of adults and literacy classes, should explore these basic issues so as to make the content relevant and immediately useful for learners.

There is a need to develop effective communication strategies if information is to reach its target audience. For example, it is usually the men who attend meetings, while the women stay at home. If the purpose of the meeting is to explain the importance of boiling drinking water, and this is a task carried out by women, telling the men might be to address the wrong audience.
IV.5 Linkages and coordination

POVERTY eradication involves many sectors, including agriculture, health, youth services and child welfare, in addition to education. Development and poverty eradication require coordinated action among the various sector ministries, and NGOs, religious groups, the private sector, regional and national governments, and the poor themselves. Coordination among such a large number of different groups is an enormous task, but is essential for the efficient use of resources and sustainable development.

Cooperation among relevant ministries within countries is needed. The Ministry of Education must work alongside other ministries in the fight against poverty. Efficiency is greatly improved if there is a central route for information to get to a community. Rather than setting up different programmes and methods of dissemination, information from other ministries, such as Agriculture, Culture or Health, can be disseminated through the education system. For example, new farming techniques could be included in the curriculum in a farming community. Local musicians, traditional craftsmen and women, or storytellers, can come to schools and promote the local culture.
Cultural traditions and practices are significant to all people, but particularly to the poor, as their abilities are largely sociocultural, and they must rely on their own human capital as a means of escaping poverty. The poor do have positive values, experiences and talents, but these are not always those that are recognized, and promoted, in the education system or wider society. They are often the guardians of traditional skills and cultural practices, which have been passed from generation to generation, and perfected along the way. Yet they have had few opportunities to make these skills economically viable.

Education should be a proactive force for change, and should prepare poor children for the world at large, while at the same time improving their lives in their communities. How can the education system do this? How can it become more effective in reaching the poorest children, and promoting their success? Part of the solution is to take cultural traditions into account when designing education policies. Studies by the Inter-American Foundation, Cultural Survival, and other organizations have shown that legitimizing, and supporting the culture and heritage of poor and marginalized groups, can lead to improvements in self-esteem, and in helping communities to reorganize themselves to improve their livelihoods.

V.1 What is culture?

First, we must decide what we mean by cultural traditions and practices. Culture, as defined by UNESCO and the World Commission on Culture and Development in its 1995 report, Our Creative Diversity, is: the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes creative expression (e.g. oral history, language, literature, performing arts, fine arts and crafts), community practices (e.g. traditional healing methods, traditional medicines, traditional natural resource management, celebrations, and patterns of social interaction that contribute to group and individual welfare and identity), and material or constructed forms, such as sites, buildings, historic city centres, landscapes, art, and objects.

V.2 Options including cultural traditions and practices in education

Participants in the International Workshop on Poverty Eradication suggested that countries should address the needs of society, in general, while reaching the poor. They noted that reaching the poorest groups requires greater flexibility in the provi-
The participants listed the steps they considered necessary for poor people to benefit from their cultural skills:

1. Undertake feasibility studies and action research on community skills that could be integrated in the provision of education.
2. Review and analyse appropriate experiences.
3. Prioritize the needs of the poorest children, and identify strategies for helping to meet those needs.
4. Develop an overall national plan of action.
5. Develop short, medium, and long-term strategies.
6. Evaluate the cost of proposed actions, and identify sources of funding and other resources in the environment – local, national, NGOs, etc.
7. Consider the different implementation strategies, and make a choice.
8. Monitor, evaluate and give feedback to the programme design, to ensure that the poorest children are provided with an education that will improve their lives.

New curriculum trends leave a portion of the curriculum to be developed locally, which opens avenues for local potential to be incorporated into the school programme. Hence, in a village where the economic activity is fabric weaving, the school can include designing, colour combinations, making the loom, origin of the materials, costing, investment and marketing, as part of the school programme. Such an approach on the part of the school could strengthen the participation of the community, particularly in ensuring that all girls and boys go to school.
**Monitoring** can be thought of as “tracking progress and following up on plans, goals and activities based on agreed upon indicators and benchmarks.” Until recently however, there has not been a strong focus on monitoring interventions. We often do not know the level of success of a programme, or even if it is reaching the right population groups. It is thus difficult to know if money has been used efficiently, or if the intervention produced the desired results, or any result at all.

A number of factors should be considered throughout the monitoring process - including identification of the target population, identification of a baseline from which to compare results, how the programme is managed, the resources used, and who should be involved in monitoring, and at what level.

**VI.1 Monitoring investments**

In order to know if an intervention has produced results, there must be a baseline from which to make comparisons. Participants at the International Workshop on Education and Poverty Eradication included a baseline survey, as a strategy option for countries wishing to create an effective monitoring system for poverty eradication programmes. They indicated that such a survey should:

- be participatory;
- identify existing structures and opportunities at country, region or community level, e.g. number of schools, location, geographic dispersion and coverage among poor communities, and the number of children enrolled;
- provide information on the number, location and distribution of health facilities;
- look at the availability of clean water and food sources for the poorest children;
- consider the environment and sanitary conditions in the places where the poorest children live.

The participants next raised a number of issues to consider in the monitoring process, including:

1. Where are these children? Are they urban or rural? Where in the country are they located? What are their names?
2. How is the children’s programme/intervention being managed?
3. Who is responsible for children’s programmes in this area?
4. Are the programmes sustainable? What are some of the sustainability mechanisms?
5. What progress or achievements has the programme made so far? Has there been a positive or negative
impact?
6. What challenges are being faced in the implementation process, or by the children themselves, as they try to access the programme?
7. How relevant is the programme to children’s needs?
8. Are there adequate resources available in the communities where the poorest children live?
9. Is there a public commitment to assist the children?

These are all important considerations. Any programme aimed at poor communities must be accessible to them, or it will fail in its purpose. If there is a problem related to implementation or access, the programme manager must be flexible and allow for changes to be made. Relevance is also of key importance, as children and families will choose not to participate if they cannot see how the programme will benefit them. And even if a programme is well designed, relevant and accessible, if there are insufficient resources available to sustain it (as is often the case), it will fall apart and the benefits will be lost.

VI.2 Who should be involved?

Parents, teachers, and leaders in the community itself, must be participants in the monitoring process. They know the situation best, and are well placed to assess any results. This may be complemented by involving NGOs, other groups and organizations, regional or county councils, and other administrative units. In Uganda, for example, monitoring starts at what is known as LC1, the Village Council and continues with LC2, the Parish Council, LC3, the sub-County Council, and when necessary, LC4, the County Council. Independent monitors or interest groups, which may not be providing any support for the exercise, but who wish to be involved, may also be a part of the process. Professionals and experts who have experience working with children, and/or with surveys and monitoring strategies, should be involved as well.

VI.3 Country Examples

i) Malawi

The government of Malawi has set up a Poverty Monitoring Unit, to track and follow up on poverty trends. It set up a steering committee to link the Ministry of Education with sectorial ministries, for example, Agriculture and Health and NGOs. Various poverty studies were carried out in the year 2000, which highlighted a number of problems in the monitoring process, including:

- Poor coordination
- Lack of sustainability, especially for the school feeding programme
- Poor focus
- Limited impact
- Exclusion of marginalized groups
- Lack of a basic definition of who the poor are

The government, in an effort to provide clearer, more accurate monitoring mechanisms, and to empower the districts, has decentralized the monitoring process to the district level. A monitoring exercise based on sample districts, with households as units, was carried out. At first, only the national team was given responsibility. In the spirit of decentralization, however, the district teams were then integrated, and the national team’s role confined to logistics, supervision, and the coordination of activities.

To encourage more children to stay in school, the government has also begun to identify the poorest children at the household level, and provide incentives for them to stay in school for at least 18
days a month.

With respect to monitoring, the following questions were raised by the workshop:

- At what place/level is monitoring ideal: district, regional, national, village level?
- When, and how often, should monitoring exercises be carried out? In Malawi, monitoring is undertaken every six months, although the reports are often late.
- How to develop a tool that the people themselves would use to monitor?
- What areas should the monitoring exercise cover? It should be an embracing approach, involving the beneficiaries and should cover all aspects of the programme.
- Stakeholders’ assessments are necessary.

ii) Uganda: A Grading Matrix

P. K. Kayiso, a consultant, developed a grading matrix to help monitor poverty levels in Uganda. The Poverty Grading Matrix can be a useful tool in ranking households, administrative regions and regional areas with respect to poverty levels. It was developed using an array of weighted variables:

- illiteracy rate
- lack of access to safe water
- lack of access to health care
- per capita GDP expenditure
- Human Poverty Index (HPI)
- household size (at district level)
- dependency ratio (at district level).

Each variable was assigned a distinct score out of ten, and the total score was then compared to a “cut-off” value, below which a district is classified as poor. This poverty line may be set lower to determine the core poor, or the poorest of the poor.

The consultant noted that better variables may be available in ranking levels of poverty and primary education. However, given the weaknesses of variables, such as primary school enrolment rates, which may be inflated, out-of-date, or otherwise unreliable, the above variables were the only ones that could be considered at the time. It was also noted that heads of households are often not forthcoming with information, especially regarding sexually transmitted diseases.

The next step in the process involved transferring the information from the matrix on to a poverty incidence map. In this way, the results are more simply and clearly displayed.

The Poverty Grading Matrix (PGM) model can be very useful in the monitoring process. It does not use regression coefficients, is clear, and can be easily understood by a layman. It provides objective assessments of the degree of poverty in different districts, and could be used by agencies to focus interventions on the areas most in need. It must be emphasized, however, that the type of variables used has a strong influence on the ranking of districts with respect to poverty levels. The PGM includes variables, such as dependency ratio and household size, which are not included in all models, but which researchers have identified as important in the determination of poverty levels.

The model is the initial step towards a monitoring of the interventions, and identification of the children who are being reached with assistance from various sources of help, including government contributions.
VII.1 Looking ahead

A forward-looking approach to poverty eradication must recognize the central role of education, while promoting the need for economic growth. Poor groups should not be the objects of programmes, but should be actively engaged in the process of poverty eradication, so that the outcomes address their real needs.1

Undoubtedly education is an important key for breaking the poverty cycle, and releasing the potential of children everywhere. It permits the preparation of individuals to enter the labour market, and adapt to its frequent changes. It also has the potential for decreasing income inequality, that is a constant source of disaffection, and sometimes conflict and destabilization. It influences health, as educated parents tend to take better care of their own health and that of their children, with positive influences on their communities, their societies and their countries. Further, education contributes to the establishment of stable and peaceful societies, permits people to discharge their responsibilities as citizens, and participate more actively and effectively in the management of the affairs of their countries.

In this period of global awareness, when individual development is regarded as a human right, then there is an overriding need for macroeconomic progress to have an impact at the microlevel. Otherwise the plight of the poorest children may remain hidden in reports that show significant progress in UPE. The benefits of education are widely recognized, but many countries have been constrained in implementing appropriate education policies, because of limited financial resources, trained personnel, and inadequate management capacity.

Short-term strategies should focus on taking action, so that millions of children can be helped. This will require a national movement to mobilize all services that reach the poorest people, religious groups, NGOs, entertainers, ministries of education, youth, sports, social welfare, agriculture, health, parliamentarians, the business community and service clubs. In short, an effective programme for reaching the poorest children must be led by the Head of State, with a single message that all poor children must be fed, clothed, housed and educated.

VII.2 Education as a catalyst for breaking the poverty cycle for children

The participants at the International Workshop concluded that programmes should display the

following characteristics if they are to have any chance of success.

■ **Be accessible** - all children should have access to schooling, and be prepared to learn. For the poorest children, this means schools in their geographic area, no school fees, free books and no hidden costs. At least one meal should be provided per day.

■ **Be participatory** - community involvement must go beyond the level of financial contribution, and include involvement in the planning, management and monitoring of pro-poor programmes.

■ **Be judicious and expedient** in the delivery of social services

■ **Be holistic** - programmes must cater for the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor domains. Curriculum and teaching methods must give consideration to the nature and experiences of the poorest children. The school programme should, in addition to the core programme, give special attention to:
  • Cognitive needs
  • Language development
  • Wealth generation
  • Learning by doing
  • Early stimulation
  • Social and emotional needs
  • Confidence building
  • Social relationships
  • Emotional support
  • Managing conflicts
  • Managing differences
  • Positive attitudes and values
  • Preventive education
  • Psychomotor needs
  • Enriching skills
  • Developing new skills
  • Designing
  • Research in environmental resources

■ **Be relevant and of good quality**

For a poor parent, schooling must have a tangible outcome. The skills children learn on the street, or at home, are necessary for their survival. Organized education will need to compete with the relevance of “home” education. Contrary to common beliefs, the poorest and marginalized groups do value education, but it must make economic sense for family survival. The challenging question for educators is “What should constitute relevant education for the poorest children?” The simple answer is “education that helps them out of poverty”. Education planners must be prepared to do research into the children’s background, and tailor their programmes according to survival needs. National curricula should be sensitive to these needs. As mentioned before, this can be achieved by addressing specific poverty issues, linking the content of education to the culture of the beneficiaries, and income generating projects or programmes in the geographical area. There should also be a greater link between schooling and the world of work. Employers can play a positive role in helping the poorest children to enter the work place.

■ **Be flexible**

It seems impossible to imagine that an education system catering for millions of children can be flexible enough to meet the needs of small groups of children within poor population groups, but it can be done. One of the main drawbacks in educational planning for the poorest children is that the children are not identified and, therefore, the plans do not necessarily respond to their needs. The NGOs set a better example by identifying the needs of the children, and working with them in their geographical areas. Nonetheless, the NGO programmes are generally small, and sometimes of uncer-
tain quality. However, governments, jointly with NGOs and communities, could provide more flexibility in the education system, so that it provides relevant educational content.

- **Stimulate commitment among educators and teachers**

Teachers should be trained to teach all children. At the same time, the teacher has a social responsibility for a poor child. Planning to reach the poorest children can be an invaluable exercise, but in reality implementation is, of course, problematic. It is unlikely that teachers, who themselves are underpaid, can be expected to make extra efforts to ensure that all children within their communities fully exercise their right to an education. Governments must provide incentive schemes for teachers who are willing to work in the poorest areas, and show good results.

Nevertheless, teachers can be trained in the following areas, among others, in how to:
- Be perceptive of children in difficulties
- Provide emotional security for the poorest children
- Integrate children into the class, so that they care for each other
- Show genuine interest in the attendance and participation of children in school
- Be resourceful and establish partnerships within a community
- Adapt the curriculum to the experiences of the children
- Draw on children's life experiences to explain curriculum concepts
- Carry out remedial activities to ensure consistent achievement
- Test and measure learning
- Overcome barriers to the active participation of the poorest child in the class
- Assist the poorest girls to be successful in school
- Motivate children for lifelong learning
- Help children to create wealth and utilize opportunities for progress
- Help children to understand the most critical health issues, and be able to protect themselves

### VII.3 Lessons learned

In all countries pilot programmes can be found from which to draw lessons. However, there seems to be a gap in knowledge sharing, and an even greater gap in incorporating the experiences gained, into the national educational reform programme. Coordination of initiatives to assist poor children would contribute to knowledge sharing, and facilitate wider implementation of successful experiences.

### VII.4 Linkages with financing partners for education

A government is responsible for poverty eradication measures, although its financial partners play a key role in ensuring the availability of resources. Cooperation, not competition, should be a prime objective among the financing partners contributing to poverty eradication. No such partner has, on its own, the capacity to implement programmes on the scale needed. It is through the coordination of the efforts that donors can achieve the scale of implementation necessary for most programmes to be effective. The financing partners also need to communicate, and work with, local interest groups and community organizations, and make use of local knowledge and expertise in developing the policy direction for the respective agencies. Communities themselves
have a wealth of information about poverty. The poor can tell us what they need, and how programmes can be organized and implemented best to reach them.

Decentralization

The decentralization of educational planning and management to the community is important in the poverty eradication process. A single, national education policy cannot be applied in every community with equal levels of success. Needs are different in different areas, and the national government cannot be expected to know what is needed in each community, nor can we expect accurate identification of who, and where, the poorest children are at a national level. This is more accurately done locally.

Decentralization permits communities to take a leading role in the basic education of their children. It permits them to be active participants in the curriculum planning process, giving voice to the learning needs of all children, including the poorest. This is one of the conditions for success - communities must be an integral part of the education planning process.

Care must be taken, however, that control is not lost on the way down. If authority has been decentralized, it will be necessary to ensure effective communication and the needed capabilities among the different levels of government.
Poverty eradication has been on the international agenda for many years now, and a number of countries have made achievements in this direction. Many have designed good strategies on paper, through such mechanisms as PRSPs and ESIP (Education Sector Investment Plan), and this is a step in the right direction, but societies and governments must be willing to make real changes. What is missing in many cases is not the planning or the resources, but a real commitment to act.

Abject poverty can be eradicated, if an enabling environment for learning is put in place. The poverty cycle can be broken, and the way is through education. To break the cycle, we must provide education for the poorest children. It will be necessary to generate new knowledge about the children - where to find them, their characteristics and their needs - so that educational policies, plans and programme implementation can be better informed.

Teacher training, and consideration of local cultural practices and traditions, can help improve the effectiveness of education in poverty eradication, by making school more relevant to poor children. The education system needs to recognize the value of traditional culture, and be flexible enough to allow teachers to adapt the curriculum to the local community. Teachers need to be aware of the power in their hands to help improve the well-being of the poorest children.

There is a need for more focused efforts by the donor community. Various organizations with the same goals must work together, to enable programmes to be instituted on a sufficiently large scale. There is also a need for the improved monitoring of investments. Governments and partners must ensure that most of the investments intended for the poorest children reach them, and are not absorbed by a large administrative infrastructure.

There must be a willingness on the part of the poor to help themselves. Poor people, especially women and girls, must be empowered to recognize, and act on, the possibilities for change. They must be given the tools necessary to help them-