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Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality

Monitoring EFA goals from a gender perspective

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Monitoring EFA Goals from a gender perspective

A contribution from ICAE'S CONFINTEA V and EFA Follow-up Report

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The active participation of civil society in international conferences and summits bringing in demands, discussing resolutions, constructing their agendas and discourses, is no doubt an important step towards deepening democracy. A further step in this process has become the commitment of civil society organisations to follow-up the outcomes of these conferences through monitoring the compliance of the resolutions taken.

These follow up activities are not only citizens' rights regarding accountability of their governments – and as such have been promoted at the same conferences – but they also signify an important contribution towards partnership for the implementation of the resolutions. It is in accordance with these two reasons that the International Council for Adult Education (ICAIE) as an international network of civil society organisations has committed to produce a global Follow Up Report to be presented at CONFINTEA V + 6 Mid-term Review Conference.

The Report will present the “state of art” of adult education in 16 countries around five areas taken from CONFINTEA's Hamburg Declaration and Agenda for the Future. These areas are:

- Ensuring the Universal Right to Literacy and Basic Education
- Promoting Active citizenship, Awareness of Discrimination and a Culture of Peace and Human Rights
- Ensuring the Right to Work-Related Adult Education
- Promoting the Right to Health Education
- Ensuring the Involvement of Civil Society in Environmental and Development Problems

All these areas have been crosscut with gender issues and special emphasis has been put on the access of disadvantaged groups to learning. It should be stated that many issues included in these areas have been part of other international conferences and summits that have presented recommendations regarding the promotion of educational activities for adults. But given the importance that the Education For All Conference at Dakar has had for education in general and world wide, this Follow Up Report includes and associates to CONFINTEA's resolutions, three of the six EFA Goals which are related to adult education.

The goals referring to the expansion of adult literacy and to the enhancement of educational quality are closely associated to the first of CONFINTEA's theme, the universal right to literacy and basic education. The EFA Observatory

Programme carried by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is conducting a thorough monitoring of these goals world wide through a set of indicators. The ICAE Follow Up Report cannot of course carry out the global survey that the UIS is making at a global level, but it will propose some complementary indicators and the results in 16 countries.

It is in the goal referring to the promotion of life skills for young people and adults and the equitable access of them to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes where the ICAE Report has given a first step in identifying indicators and gathering information to assess the compliance of this goal. The challenges for this task are not few or small.

In first place, there isn't a common definition among countries on "life skills". Nevertheless, and following the definitions taken by the UIS¹ these can be considered as the "abilities necessary for a person to take part in community life". These abilities may refer either to the so called "generic skills", the attitudes towards one self and others, to problem solving, to integrate and participate, or to more specific knowledge necessary to survive in everyday life. In this last case it refers to numeracy and literacy, health awareness, work-related knowledge and citizenship.

This last definition responds to the five areas identified for the Follow Up Report. And this is not casual; they were chosen because they represent major areas of knowledge necessary to any adult person to participate in a creative way in the shaping of their lives and societies. As to the first definition, the generic skills, once the main ones identified, they should crosscut all programmes and contents, but their assessment requires in depth, qualitative methodologies.

In second place educational programmes on life skills are usually carried at non formal levels and by different governmental offices. The registration of these programmes: their contents, number of participants, budget allocated, is not systematic. For these reasons to localise them and gather information on their characteristics is an extremely difficult task.

If we accept that women occupy a subordinated place in society, that they have had less access to education, to citizenship, to civil rights, to income, that they have taken subordinated places in work, in politics, in power management, that they have specific health problems regarding their reproductive and sexual life, that they suffer domestic and sexual violence, we then must admit that **they need specific abilities to revert this situation.**

Which are these specific knowledge needs? Which would be the minimum educational opportunities given to women to "ensure their equitable access to

¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2002 EFA Monitoring Report

appropriate learning and life-skills programme"? And, how may we assess these opportunities are given to them?

Four types of indicators were identified in the Follow Up Report to respond to these questions. Some of them cross cut the five areas mentioned and others are included in only one area.

A) The existence of data disaggregated by sex

This is the first and most important tool to make visible the unjust situation of women. It was only until the late 70's and due to the advocacy work of women movements, that the first statistics disaggregated by sex started to show the differences in access to education, work, income, health, etc. Although much has advanced (with the support of UN Agencies) still many countries do not count with all data disaggregated this way.

The Follow Up Report gathered statistical information on levels of education of adult population and on enrolment in literacy and basic adult education programmes. Two countries out of twelve that presented information on levels of education and three out of eight that had information on enrolment had no data disaggregated by sex.

In the countries participating, the results regarding levels of education follow the trends of UNESCO's statistics: women have less access to education than men. This is particularly so regarding population with no schooling, in five countries in thirteen women are far behind men. A different situation occurs with population with complete compulsory education where there is practically parity and in two cases men are behind women. As to enrolment rates, women are more represented than men in literacy and compulsory education programmes.

In non formal programmes, data on participation is very scarce and there is practically no disaggregation by sex.

B) The existence of organisational structures for promoting gender equity through educational programmes

It has been proved that specific offices or departments have to assume the responsibility of the promotion of gender equity. Therefore this is considered an indicator of political will of governments towards the commitment of offering gender sensitive educational programmes.

In the Follow Up study only 7 countries in 16 were identified as having Gender Offices at central governmental level. It is very difficult to monitor the promotion of gender equity when there is no responsible institution in charge, and programmes depend on other governmental departments.

C) The existence of programmes specifically focused on women

A long history of subordination has generated specific values and attitudes in women like lack of self-esteem, difficulties to participate in group with men, difficulties to face patriarchal forces both in private and public areas. Experience has demonstrated that participation in women groups helps to analyse these difficulties and overcome them. Therefore educational programmes focused on women may ensure methodological tools to facilitate their participation and empowerment.

This indicator was followed all along the different areas and contents. Out of sixteen, ten countries have literacy programmes focused in women. Six countries had programmes focused on women regarding Citizenship, awareness of discrimination and human rights. Eight countries had programmes on work-related education focused on women. Ten had them on health-related education that included besides reproductive and sexual health and domestic violence prevention, other issues as prevention of AIDS, specific health problems and nutrition. Four countries had programmes on environmental issues focused on women. On the whole women have more programmes focused in them than other disadvantaged groups like ethnic/racial minorities, migrants and indigenous population. Nevertheless as it can be noted, still not all countries have understood the importance of implementing specific programmes for women.

D) The existence of programmes with specific gender contents.

Finally there are specific areas of knowledge and skills necessary to women for their everyday life. In the Follow Up Report the programmes monitored were: programmes for promoting awareness of discrimination and gender equity, programmes for promoting political and economic participation, programmes for promoting reproductive and sexual health understood as a human right, and programmes for the prevention of domestic violence.

The Follow Up study had no possibility of making content analysis of the programmes monitored, and their existence relies on what official sources declared to the country researchers. The results are very optimistic in this issue. Practically all countries have programmes promoting gender awareness and equity, political participation, reproductive health and prevention of domestic violence. Less countries, nine in fifteen, declare having programmes on the right to a healthy sexuality. Of course these have still to be considered first attempts to evaluate the state of art in this issue because there is still very little information on participation rates, extension of programmes, and, as said before, real contents of them.

There is still a long way to go if we wish to assess the political will of governments towards giving women equitable access to appropriate life-skills

learning: base line information should be established, further indicators developed, systematic gathering of data done.

UN agencies and civil society organisations have a crucial role in helping and pressing governments to at least:

- Identify and centralise data on gender-related educational programmes
- Gather information and disaggregate it by sex on participation and enrolment rates in non-formal programmes
- Account for the budgets allocated to non-formal educational programmes and their evolution in time

This information will not only give political transparency and accountability but will enable also to advance in more adequate and accessible learning opportunities for women.