



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
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Education for All

First Meeting of the  
Working Group on Debt Swaps for Education  
27-28 November 2006  
UNESCO, Paris, France

Final Report

## **Background**

In October 2005, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted at its 33<sup>rd</sup> session a resolution<sup>1</sup> inviting the Director-General to establish a Working Group to assess the educational implications of debt swaps, to actively participate in the debate on debt swaps for education initiatives and to study the possibility of applying similar initiatives in other fields of UNESCO's competence. The Working Group was established in 2006 and includes representatives of donor and developing countries, development agencies, international organizations, regional development banks and civil society that are engaged in education and EFA and its financing, and/or are concerned or involved with debt swaps<sup>2</sup>. The first meeting of the Working Group<sup>3</sup> was held at UNESCO Headquarters on 27-28 November 2006 to initiate an exchange of experiences and decide on a work plan for the period of time leading up to the 34<sup>th</sup> session of UNESCO's General Conference in October 2007.

## **Opening**

In his opening address to the first meeting of the Working Group, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, highlighted the need to place the issue of funding for education, and more particularly for Education for All (EFA), in a wider context. While an important funding gap for EFA persists despite the efforts of many developing countries and donors, education and economic development must be discussed together. Therefore, Mr. Matsuura placed high expectations in the Working Group and said he looked forward to the outcomes of its work which would, in turn, inform his report to the General Conference at its 34<sup>th</sup> session in autumn 2007.

## **Introduction**

Mr Daniel Filmus, Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Argentina and Chairman of the Working Group, gave a comprehensive presentation aimed to provide, in ten questions and answers, tools for discussing and promoting debt for education swaps within the context of the international commitment to Education for All. He also submitted to the group a number of suggestions concerning the role of the Working Group, in addition to the proposed Terms of Reference.

## **Session 1 - Debt Swaps for Education: Key Concepts and Types of Practice**

The objective of the first session, chaired by Mr. Sibry Tapsoba from the African Development Bank (ADB), was to establish a basic conceptual framework and to build a common understanding of debt swaps for education. Several participants thought that there was a unique opportunity for UNESCO and other EFA partners to raise the profile of this type of debt swap as an innovative financial mechanism at a moment when education is recognised as a determining factor of development. Debt swaps for education could be one possibility, among others, of

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution in Annex 1

<sup>2</sup> Members and Terms of Reference in Annex 2

<sup>3</sup> Agenda in Annex 3. List of participants in Annex 4.

addressing the funding shortage for EFA. The burden of foreign debt on the budgets of developing countries is one of the factors limiting their investment in education. If these countries show commitment to reach the EFA goals, they should not be allowed to fail. Debt swaps for education might allow certain countries to reallocate funds presently used for debt servicing towards strengthening their education sector.

### ***Establishing the basic conceptual framework***

The discussion was framed by the Working Paper prepared for the meeting and the Chairman's initial presentation. Members of the Working Group agreed that the following were key issues with regard to debt swaps for education: debt implications; additionality; teamwork; participation of civil society; transparency and efficiency; leadership of national governments – in particular ministries of education; sustainability; and link with other initiatives.

#### *Debt implications*

The reasons why countries have debt in the first place should not be forgotten. Domestic debt implications, especially for sustainable development, need to be looked at as well as structural adjustment and debt conditionality. Different categories of debt should be examined, including multilateral, bilateral and commercial debt. It was stated that current amounts of debt swaps for education remain rather modest as they tend to be limited to bilateral and multilateral debt when the lion's share of debt is owed to private sector creditors. The risk of countries being 'trapped', through debt swaps, in longer-term financial dependence was mentioned, given that they might rely too much on foreign assistance and not sufficiently invest in education from their national budgets.

#### *Additionality*

Several participants insisted that debt swaps for education should not substitute ODA. Debt swaps can and should not replace other investment and financing mechanisms, including national budget allocations, but must be considered as an additional tool to mobilize extra resources for education.

#### *Teamwork*

A debt swap involves a whole range of stakeholders and there is a need to create a climate of confidence and trust. Ministries of Education should lead the initiative. Various other ministries, including Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Finance ministries, both from the creditor and from the debtor country involved, should work hand-in-hand from the initial stages. Ministries of Finance should have clear guidelines and see tangible development goals in order to be able to disburse funds.

### *Participation of civil society*

Civil society has an important role to play in recipient and creditor countries in terms of raising awareness about debt and its impact on sustainable development, about education issues including quality, and about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Civil society also contributes to capacity building in the North and South, advocacy with governments and ensuring better donor coordination and monitoring processes.

### *Transparency and Efficiency*

Creditors should clearly establish and communicate on what basis debtor countries are eligible so that debt swaps can be approached in a context of transparency and do not serve as instruments of political selectivity. Debt swaps should not be tied to buying goods and services of creditor countries. Middle income countries should not be excluded from debt swaps. Although they receive no official development assistance (ODA), their commitment to the MDGs, EFA and other development goals places a heavy burden on their countries.

Once a debt swap is under negotiation or being implemented, it is equally essential to have in place efficient, transparent and consistent mechanisms and working methods, agreed on by every stakeholder in a debt swap, including civil society. Beneficiary countries need to use the additional resources wisely and effectively. Close collaboration between donors and the Ministry of Finance could improve monitoring and evaluation and decrease management costs. Creditor countries must be confident that debt swap funding is actually spent in the jointly agreed areas.

### *National leadership*

In the context of debt swaps, decision-making processes must guarantee that the national interests of debtor countries are preserved. National ownership of education development is key and should guide meaningful decisions with regard to programmes funded under the debt swap, despite certain inherent constraints which make it easier, for example, to invest in infrastructures than in running costs. Therefore, technical and institutional capacity must be built in countries which are lacking adequate resources, especially at the Education Ministry level. The success of debt swaps for education also depends on credible and factual information on the education sector, by governments and other partners. Countries could be assisted in revising poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) to address education as a priority.

### *Link with other initiatives*

In the longer run, participants in a debt swap for education must ensure that programmes funded through a swap are financially and technically sustainable and that costs can be absorbed in the national budget when the swap funding ends. Debt swaps for education could be linked to debt swaps in other sectors, including health and gender, and should be closely integrated with other initiatives, such as for example the EFA Fast Track Initiative and sectoral assistance. Possible linkages between debt swaps and public-private partnerships in education should also be looked at. In the near future, the search for additional funding for EFA should focus on debt swaps

alongside other innovative financial mechanisms, as indicated by the High-Level Group on EFA in November 2006.

## **Session 2 - Experiences**

The second session was chaired by Mr. Tan from the Philippines and focused on perspectives on debt swaps expressed by multilateral organizations, donor and beneficiary countries and civil society. The Chairman's perspective for the session was upon what UNESCO might be able to contribute to better assess existing cases in order to promote, as a "trusted broker", successful practices and improved mechanisms.

Country experiences with debt swaps in various fields were presented, specifically by Morocco, the Philippines, Indonesia, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Spain and the African Development Bank. Successes and challenges of debt swaps, approaches to the application of debt swaps for education and types of education targeted in debt swaps were the main topics of the discussion.

### ***Country examples***

The Working Group stressed that the process of a debt swap for education requires a thorough evaluation of existing capacity and debt and education realities in any specific country. No single model can be applied to all countries.

Morocco shared its experience in debt management: it reduced its debt servicing significantly from 2001 to 2005 due to debt reimbursement and conversion. Its debt management transactions have not yet focused on education but Morocco is highly interested to explore debt swaps for education which would allow part of the resources allocated to debt service to be invested in a crucial domain instead of leaving the country.

In the case of the Philippines, lessons concerning national ownership, accountability, transparency, innovation and communication could be learned from three beneficial debt swaps for nature. The Swiss Debt Reduction Facility facilitated a debt swap transaction in 1995, establishing the Foundation for a Sustainable Society, Incorporated to implement development projects. Similarly, the Foundation for the Philippine Environment, which was established using major funds from the debt swap conducted by the World Wide Fund, a trustee through a 1991 agreement with USAID, funded a number of biodiversity conservation projects. In 2002, the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) cancelled the Philippine bilateral debt since the country allocated an amount equivalent to 30% of the debt for a community-based forestry management project.

In Indonesia, Germany has committed to execute three debt swaps for education to establish learning resource centres for primary schools, build junior secondary schools, especially in deprived distant areas, and reconstruct school buildings for primary and junior secondary schools affected by the tsunami. There are some key lessons to draw from the German debt swap model in Indonesia. Community and district authorities demanded to understand the guidelines and the agreements signed by both parties in order to execute the activity properly. Funding came

directly to district level, which resulted in less bureaucratic procedures. Work performance, motivation, discipline and self-confidence of the stakeholders could be improved by the audit systems.

Introducing a successful debt swap for education experience aided by the Spanish Government, El Salvador identified characteristics that made the programme successful, including high-level political commitment of both the debtor and creditor country, the existence of a well established national development plan, cooperation with the Organization of American States (OEI), and a thorough review of similar existing programmes to learn lessons. Spain added that this successful experience was due to close collaboration among different government bodies as well as NGOs. Civil society contributed substantially by providing necessary information to both governments and in the design of projects to be funded.

Costa Rica presented its experiences of debt swaps for nature during the last decade which included biodiversity projects, bilateral arrangements with Canada to develop biological research, and debt swaps with Spain for conservation as well as “bio-literacy”.

Spain briefly reported on a number of other initiatives such as those in Uruguay which focused on nature, education and health and which highlighted the diversity of debt swap programmes.

Spain then presented a new national law which will regulate future debt swaps and also foresees that the Parliament will control their implementation. The Council of Ministers signed an agreement as a part of the debt act which established committees with Spanish and recipient country representatives and civil society to enhance accountability and supervision. The Spanish Government will have to submit a plan for a major new initiative in favour of highly-indebted countries before the end of 2006. Spain explained its commitment to contribute to education investment as a consequence of its commitment to EFA and to the MDGs which required supporting poorer countries in their efforts as well as a better coordination among donors. Whereas primary education and teacher training were priorities, in line with the MDGs and the recommendations of the Cairo meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA, Spain also considered technical and vocational education and training as crucial.

While it is actively promoting debt swaps for education within different multilateral settings, such as the EU and OEI, Spain insisted that debt swaps were not a magic formula but just another valuable instrument for education development.

### ***Issues of concern***

Participants underlined the importance of leadership of debtor governments and their capacity to be transparent and effective. In quoting the example of a country where NGOs received twice more aid money than the government, ADB highlighted the necessity for building or strengthening the capacity of governments to deliver. The issue was not to diminish or weaken the role of civil society but to make sure that governments played their role as well. While more capacity and transparency are expected, certain African governments do not appear to be capable of handling a debt swap efficiently. Therefore, a number of NGOs have been involved in technical aspects of African swaps.

UNICEF considered that debt swaps should support the highest national priorities in terms of poverty reduction – whether or not those are focused on the education sector. Debt swaps should support projects, rather than a specific sector, as projects can cut across sectors. Successful poverty-reduction projects should have a positive impact on education, especially if the education sector already benefits from other specific funding support, e.g. through the FTI.

Spain echoed the Philippines and UNICEF in that there is no single model that works in every country and recommended that the objectives of debt swaps must be in line with the country's development plan.

Monitoring was raised as an important feature by many participants. Spain described, as an example, three levels of coordination and monitoring stipulated in its swap agreements. The first level is a bi-national 'political' committee composed of creditors and debtor government representatives. The second level is a technical committee which includes civil society representatives of both countries, to ensure accountability and transparency. Finally, the third level corresponds to the actual technical supervision by the recipient country.

Stressing that donor harmonization is a key ingredient, EURODAD raised concern about the lack of dialogue and cooperation between donors granting debt swaps in specific countries. This has a negative impact on the efficiency of swap operations but also limits the funding available – larger amounts could be “pooled” by multilateral swap arrangements involving several donors, instead of various isolated initiatives. OEI mentioned some examples of multi-donor debt swaps as well as their difficulties and suggested a recommendation by the Working Group on UNESCO's possible role in encouraging such coordinated multi-donor debt swaps initiatives for education.

The importance of documenting debt swaps was underlined; the fact that little or no information is preserved concerning experiences of past decades, and even fewer records on evaluations, prevents us from drawing lessons. Indicators must be developed to evaluate which debt swaps have been successful, taking into account different criteria, and monitoring to ensure that the criteria have been followed.

Many participants reflected on the type, level or sub-sectors of education which should be targeted in debt swaps for education. Morocco and the ADB stated the possibility of extending debt swaps for education to the secondary as well as tertiary levels. One of the rationales for this extension was the impact of globalization and the need for research and higher education so that the country can foster human resources which would be able to compete at the international level. On the other hand, Spain and the Islamic Development Bank emphasized the focus on primary education since it is important not only for the EFA goals but also for the MDGs.

UNESCO insisted that the quality aspect of education must also receive due attention: how is it possible to go from access to success? Universal primary education achievement relates to access and not completion and the pressure is not only on basic education but also on the secondary level. Furthermore, children, young people and adults who are not reached by the formal

education system are one of the key challenges of EFA which means that the non-formal education sector should not be excluded from debt swaps. Several members of the group thought that UNESCO should play a role in supporting governments in the preparation of education programmes suitable for debt swaps.

### **Session 3 - Work plan and Schedule of the Working Group**

#### ***Website and Report on Debt Swaps for Education***

The Working Group agreed on its two main deliverables: 1) a Website as a platform for information exchange and a tool for on-going consultations, and 2) a report to the Director-General of UNESCO on specific debt swap experiences focused on education, with recommendations for further action. The website, a closed workspace with password access for Working Group members, will hold relevant documents and publications provided by the members as well as collected by UNESCO and Argentina.

With regard to the Report, the Working Group discussed the following issues:

- The report, by providing the conceptual framework as well as general guidelines based on country examples of debt swaps for education but also other areas of social development, will contribute to disseminating information on the issue and hopefully trigger off a wider public debate with all stakeholders.
- There is a need to really assess outcomes and results – some countries are more successful than others, and what is successful in Latin America might not work in Africa.
- Other foreseeable and long-term innovative sources of financing should also be looked at, such as the tax on air transport.
- The report should include an indication of potential countries for debt swaps based on general criteria for their eligibility. If feasible, it should assess the potential amount of funding which could be mobilised for education through debt swaps.
- In order to prepare a credible document, it is important to bring all the partners around the table, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank who were invited to join the Working Group and the first meeting but did not come. Some participants suggested that the IMF should also be invited as a member of the Working Group. In the mid term, the group should be extended to include additional bilateral donors as well as beneficiary countries.
- The document and debate should be kept free from ideological considerations and be based on facts and figures, analysis of credible documentation and existing research as well as commissioned studies.
- Countries are pragmatic and want guidelines for action: the document should provide a structural framework for implementing debt swaps and the role of each stakeholder.
- The debate on debt swaps for education should be seen in relation to other complementary initiatives such as FTI and the Paris Declaration. Several members of FTI are also part of the



Working Group and could assist in establishing bridges. Similarly, the Working Group should take the ongoing work of the Ibero-American Summit on debt swaps into account.

### ***Responsibilities of the Working Group members***

- The Working Group members are invited to send a selection of pertinent documents, publications and summaries on past and ongoing experiences in debt swaps, if possible in two languages (English/French/Spanish), to be included in the Website.
- The Working Group should provide comments and advice from their respective perspectives on documents posted, concerning preparation of the meetings as well as the draft Report for the Director-General.
- All participants should communicate about the existence of the Working Group and the issues it is dealing with it.

### ***Responsibilities of UNESCO and the Chairman***

UNESCO and the Chairman, Mr Filmus, will maintain the political momentum and raise the profile of debt swaps as a possible funding mechanism for education, and particularly for EFA.

UNESCO will continue to ensure the Secretariat of the Working Group and establish a closed website as described above.

The Chairman will prepare, in consultation with UNESCO, the draft document on debt swap experiences which will be discussed at the next meeting of the Working Group in Buenos Aires. The final revised document with concrete recommendations from the Working Group will be presented to the Director-General of UNESCO who, in turn, will report on the outcomes of the Working Group to the General Conference session in October 2007 and to the High-Level Group Meeting on EFA in Dakar in December 2007.

Some members of the WG suggested that UNESCO should play, in the longer term, a bigger role in providing technical assistance, establishing a roster of experts, monitoring transparency, developing strategies with the involvement of governments and NGOs and preparing and implementing actual education projects funded by debt swaps. The Working Group, however, should consider providing an expert (possibly through secondment) to assist UNESCO in anchoring and leading the process on debt swaps for education

### ***Next steps***

- The Chairman offered to host the second meeting of the Working Group in Buenos Aires, Argentina, tentatively in May 2007.
- Documents from all members, as well as proposals concerning the structure of the Website, should be sent to UNESCO by February for the Website to be established by March.
- The draft document to be submitted to the Buenos Aires meeting will be elaborated by the Chairman, in close consultation with UNESCO, ahead of time, for virtual discussion among group members through the Website.

UNESCO

Records of the General Conference  
33rd session Paris, 3-21 October 2005  
Volume 1 - Resolutions

.../...

**16 Debt swaps for education<sup>4</sup>**

*The General Conference,*

*Understanding* that education is a key factor in human development, as a basic tool enabling national States to influence the working and social future of their inhabitants,

*Taking into consideration* paragraph 01003 of the Draft Programme and Budget of UNESCO for 2006-2007 (33 C/5) by which Major Programme I (Education) establishes basic education for all as the principal priority,

*Considering* that attaining the Dakar goals is essential for developing human capacities and eradicating poverty,

*Taking into account* that this requires increased levels of investment in education,

*Considering* that the burden of foreign debt on the budgets of the world's developing countries is one of the factors limiting investment in education and that rising debt-reimbursement payments reduce the availability of resources for social and educational investment,

*Recalling* that in its Report, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, convened by UNESCO and presided over by Mr Jacques Delors, recommended "making debt swaps work for education",

*Recalling* the proposals made by the Ministers of Education of Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela and by the President of Peru during the 32nd session of the General Conference to encourage initiatives to swap debt for education and to request UNESCO, as a worldwide flagship educational organization, to lead the debates and initiatives relating to such actions,

*Considering* that the Ibero-American Conferences of Ministers of Education have stressed the importance of promoting in various international forums the adoption of innovative educational financing mechanisms, in particular the conversion of parts of foreign debt servicing into investment in their education systems,

*Bearing in mind* that the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Organization of American States, held in August 2005 in Trinidad and Tobago, endorsed the efforts of the governments of the Americas to explore new forms of financing for public and private investment in education, such as debt swaps,

*Considering* that some members of the Paris Club have successfully carried out debt swaps generating additional resources for education in developing countries,

*Welcoming* the new commitments in 2005 of the donor community to increase development aid by \$50 billion annually by 2010, the decision at the 2005 G8 Summit, held in Gleneagles, United Kingdom, to increase and accelerate debt relief and the resolve of the World Summit of September 2005 to promote and support the EFA agenda as an integral part of renewed international development efforts,

*Recognizing* the need to support debt-swap agreements in the framework of a transparent and efficient

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<sup>4</sup> Resolution adopted on the report of Commission II at the 17th plenary meeting, on 19 October 2005.

administration of general funds, with the participation of representatives of creditors, debtors, international bodies and civil society in the follow-up to and evaluation of education projects undertaken to that end,

*Invites* the Director-General:

(a) to establish a working group to be composed of representatives designated by interested Member States, without financial implications for UNESCO, to assess the educational implications of debt swaps and other innovative financing mechanisms and report its findings to the Finance Working Group of the Fast Track Initiative;

(b) to participate actively in the debate on foreign-debt swap for education initiatives by encouraging inter-agency meetings on alternative financing of education and contributing to ongoing debt-swap experiences;

(c) to study the possibility of applying similar initiatives in the Organization's other fields of competence.

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**Working Group on Debt Swaps for Education**

**1. Composition of the Working Group**

Members will be appointed for the duration of the biennium (until end 2007). Governments as well as organizations should each nominate *one expert* of their choice. Other institutions could be invited on an *ad hoc* basis.

**Chair:** Mr Daniel Filmus, Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Argentina

Countries

Spain, Germany, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
Philippines, Indonesia  
Senegal, South Africa  
Morocco, Egypt  
Brazil, Costa Rica

Other Members

Development Agencies: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank  
International organizations: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI)  
Regional Development Banks: African Development Bank, Interamerican Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank  
Civil society representatives: European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD), African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), Red Latinoamericana sobre Deuda, Desarrollo y Derechos (LATINDADD)

**2. Terms of Reference**

The Working Group on Debt Swaps for Education will:

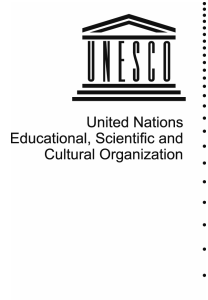
1. Gather and reflect on experiences of debt swaps in various fields and different countries, in order to guide the development of recommendations for education;
2. Consult expert opinion;
3. Formulate potential scenarios for debt swaps in the education domain;
4. Consider different modalities for sharing information and experience with countries interested or involved in debt swaps for education, such as the preparation of policy guidance briefs;

5. Submit to the Director-General, in time for him to report to the 34<sup>th</sup> session of UNESCO's General Conference on the outcomes of the Working Group's deliberations, a report on its work, with recommendations on the value and usefulness of debt swaps for education and on best practices conducive to the successful implementation of debt swaps for education.

### **3. Funding**

The Working Group is to be funded through extra-budgetary funds. In consultation with the Chair, financial support for its activities will be actively sought.

November 2006



## **Working Group on Debt Swaps for Education**

### **Draft Agenda of the First Meeting**

27-28 November 2006, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

#### **Monday 27 November 2006**

**10 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO

**10.15 Introduction**

Purpose and Terms of Reference of the Working Group

Daniel Filmus, Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Argentina  
and Chairman of the Working Group

**10.45 Who is Who?**

Brief Presentation of Members of the Working Group

*11.15 Coffee Break*

**11.30 Session 1- Debt Swaps for Education: Key Concepts and Types of Practice**  
Establishing the basic conceptual framework

Moderator: Sibry Tapsoba, Lead Education Expert,  
African Development Bank

*1 p.m. Lunch hosted by UNESCO*

**2.30 p.m. Session 2 – Experiences**

Perspectives on debt swaps from Multilateral Organisations, Donor and Beneficiary  
Countries, Civil Society

Moderator: Roberto Tan, Undersecretary, Department of Finance  
Philippines

*4 p.m. Coffee Break*

**Monday 27 November 2006** (continued)

**4.15 – 5.30**                      **Session 2 – Experiences (continued)**

*6 p.m.*                              *Reception hosted by UNESCO*

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**Tuesday 28 November 2006**

**9.30 a.m.**                      **Session 3 - Workplan and Schedule of the Working Group**  
Next steps : activities, responsibilities and calendar

Moderator: Daniel Filmus, Chairman of the Working Group

*11 a.m.*                              *Coffee Break*

**11.30 a.m.**                      **The Way Forward and Closing Remarks**  
**– 12.30 p.m.**                      by the Chairman and the representative of UNESCO

**WORKING GROUP ON DEBT SWAPS FOR EDUCATION**

**FIRST MEETING**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris 27-28 November 2006**

**List of Participants**

**Members**

**COUNTRIES**

**Argentina**

H.E. Mr Daniel Filmus  
Minister of Education,  
Science and Technology  
*Chairman of the Working Group*  
Pizurno No. 935  
Buenos Aires  
Argentina  
Tel: (54 11) 4129 1010  
Fax: (54 11) 4129 1020  
[ceremonial@me.gov.ar](mailto:ceremonial@me.gov.ar)

Accompanied by:

Mr Ignacio Hernaiz  
Director of Special Projects,  
Ministry of Education, Science and  
Technology  
Tel: (54 11) 4129 1010  
Fax: (54 11) 4129 1020  
[ceremonial@me.gov.ar](mailto:ceremonial@me.gov.ar)

H. E. Mr Miguel Angel Estrella Ambassador  
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,  
Permanent Delegate of Argentina to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15 UNESCO House  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 34 36/42  
Fax: (33 1) 43 06 60 35  
[dl.argentina@unesco.org](mailto:dl.argentina@unesco.org)

Mr Miguel Angel Hildmann  
Minister Plenipotentiary,  
Deputy Permanent Delegate  
Permanent Delegation of Argentina to  
UNESCO  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 34 41  
Fax: (33 1) 43 06 60 35  
[Ma.hildmann@unesco.org](mailto:Ma.hildmann@unesco.org)

Mr Luis Maria Sobron  
Counsellor  
Permanent Delegation of Argentina to  
UNESCO  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 34 38  
Fax: (33 1) 43 06 60 35  
[lm.sobron@unesco.org](mailto:lm.sobron@unesco.org)

**Spain**

H. E. Mrs María Jesús San Segundo  
Ambassador  
Permanent Delegate of Spain to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15 UNESCO House  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 33 85/86/87  
Fax: (33 1) 47 83 49 98  
[dl.hispania@unesco.org](mailto:dl.hispania@unesco.org)



Accompanied by:

Ms Tamara Zabala  
Diplomate  
Ministère AAEE Espagne  
Principe de Vergara 43, 5e  
Madrid 28006  
Espagne  
Tel: (34) 913 94 88 05/ (34) 667 58 36 97  
[Tamara.zabala@mae.es](mailto:Tamara.zabala@mae.es)

## Germany

Ms Ina Joachim  
External Project Manager  
KfW Entwicklungsbank  
Subsaharan Africa  
Palmengartenstrasse 5-9  
60325 Frankfurt, Germany  
Tel: (49) 69 7431 2273  
Fax: (49) 69 7431 3748  
[ina.joachim\\_extern@kfw.de](mailto:ina.joachim_extern@kfw.de)

## France

M. Jean-Claude Mantes  
Chargé de mission  
Direction générale de la coopération  
internationale et du développement  
Ministère des affaires étrangères français  
Tel: (33 1) 53 69 31 24/06 84 27 61 15  
[Jean-claude.mantes@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:Jean-claude.mantes@diplomatie.gouv.fr)  
[jcmantes@yahoo.fr](mailto:jcmantes@yahoo.fr)

## United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr Andreas Westerwinter  
Deputy Permanent Delegate  
Permanent Delegation of the  
United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15 UNESCO House  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 27 84  
Fax : (33 1) 47 83 27 77  
[a-westerwinter@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:a-westerwinter@dfid.gov.uk)

## Philippines

Mr Roberto Tan  
Undersecretary, Department of Finance under  
the International Finance Group  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Bangko Sentral Complex DOF  
BLDG  
Manila  
Philippines  
Tel : (632) 523 92 21  
Fax : (632) 523 92 16  
[rbtan@dof.gov.ph](mailto:rbtan@dof.gov.ph)  
Accompanied by:

H.E. Mr José A. Zaide  
Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of the Philippines to France  
Permanent Delegate of the Republic of the  
Philippines to UNESCO  
1, rue Mollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15 UNESCO House  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 30 12/29 80  
Fax: (33 1) 45 67 07 97  
[dl.philippines@unesco.org](mailto:dl.philippines@unesco.org)

Mr Igor G. Bailen  
Deputy Permanent Delegate of the Philippines  
to UNESCO  
[i.bailen@unesco.org](mailto:i.bailen@unesco.org)

## Indonesia

Dr Mudjito AK  
Director of Kindergarten and Primary  
Education, Ministry of National Education  
Jenderal Soedirman Rd. Senayan  
Building E 18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Jakarta  
Indonesia  
Tel: (62-21) 572 56 37 /41  
Fax: (62-21) 572 56 37  
[hoeshani@cbn.net.id](mailto:hoeshani@cbn.net.id)

Accompanied by:

Dr. Husaini Wardi  
Head of Sub-Directorate Program,  
Directorate of Kindergarten and Primary  
Education, Ministry of National Education  
Building E 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Tel: (62-21) 572 56 31  
Fax: (62-21) 572 56 35/37  
[hoeshani@cbn.net.id](mailto:hoeshani@cbn.net.id)

H.E. Mr Aman Wirakartkusumah  
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of  
Indonesia to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 29 72  
Fax: (33 1) 45 66 02 37  
[amb.indonesia@unesco.org](mailto:amb.indonesia@unesco.org)  
[del.indonesia@unesco.org](mailto:del.indonesia@unesco.org)

## **Sénégal**

M. Ousman Blondin Diop  
Délégué Permanent Adjoint  
Délégation du Sénégal à l'UNESCO  
Maison de l'UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel : (33 1) 45 68 33 95  
Fax : (33 1) 43 06 10 55  
[o.blondin-diop@unesco.org](mailto:o.blondin-diop@unesco.org)

## **Kingdom of Morocco**

Mr Lhoucine Ait El Mahjoub  
Directeur de l'évaluation et de la prospective  
Ministère de l'éducation nationale de  
l'enseignement supérieur, de la formation des  
cadres et de la recherche scientifique  
5, rue Inhouene Agdol  
Rabat  
Maroc  
Tel : (037) 70 64 95  
Fax : (037) 70 73 91  
[mahjoub@enssup.gov.ma](mailto:mahjoub@enssup.gov.ma)

## **Egypt**

Mr Mamdouh Mansour  
Deputy Permanent Delegate of Egypt to  
UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel : (33 1) 45 68 33 09  
Fax : (33 1) 47 83 41 87  
[m.mansour@unesco.org](mailto:m.mansour@unesco.org)

## **Brazil**

Mr Alexandre Prestes Silveira  
Advisor  
Office of International Affairs  
Ministry of Education  
Esplanada Dos Minitérios, Bl."L"s. 829  
Brasilia – DF  
Brazil  
Tel: (55 61) 21 04 92 78  
Fax: (55 61) 21 04 92 29  
[alexandresilveira@mec.gov.br](mailto:alexandresilveira@mec.gov.br)

Accompanied by:

Ms Daniela Arruda Benjamin  
Diplomate  
Permanent Delegation of Brazil to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 28 88  
Fax: (33 1) 47 83 28 40  
[d.benjamin@unesco.org](mailto:d.benjamin@unesco.org)

Mr Paulo França  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.  
Permanent Delegation of Brazil to UNESCO  
[p.franca@unesco.org](mailto:p.franca@unesco.org)

## **Costa Rica**

Ms Natalia Zamora  
Gerente del Instituto Nacional de  
Biodiversidad (InBio parque)  
Tel: (506) 507 81 57  
Fax: (506) 507 81 39  
[nazamora@inbio.ac.cr](mailto:nazamora@inbio.ac.cr)

Accompanied by:

H.E. Mr Javier Diaz Carmona  
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Costa  
Rica to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 25 72  
Fax: (33 1) 42 73 16 45  
[dl.costa-rica@unesco.org](mailto:dl.costa-rica@unesco.org)

## UN AGENCIES

### UNESCO

Mr Mark Richmond  
Director a.i.  
Division for the Coordination  
of UN Priorities  
Education Sector  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 08 17  
Fax: (33 1) 45 68 56 26/29  
[m.richmond@unesco.org](mailto:m.richmond@unesco.org)

### UNICEF

Mr Cream Wright  
Global Chief of Education  
3 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017 USA  
Tel : (1 212) 824-6619  
Fax : (1 212) 326-7129  
[cwright@unicef.org](mailto:cwright@unicef.org)

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

### OECD

Ms Barbara Ischinger  
Director, Directorate for Education  
2, rue André Pascal  
75775 Paris Cedex 16  
Tel : (33 1) 45 24 92 10  
Fax: (33 1) 44 30 61 71  
[Barbara.ischinger@oecd.org](mailto:Barbara.ischinger@oecd.org)

## OEI

Mr Hugo Camacho  
Director General de la Programación  
Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos  
para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura  
Bravo Murillo 38  
28015 Madrid, Spain  
Tel: (34 91) 594 43 82  
Fax: (34 91) 594 32 86  
[oeimad@oei.es](mailto:oeimad@oei.es)  
[hcamacho@oei.es](mailto:hcamacho@oei.es)

Accompanied by:

Mr Diego Filmus  
Consultant  
Organization of Iberoamerican States  
Paraguay 1510  
CP: 1061  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Tel: (54 11) 4813 0033  
[dfilmus@oei.org.ar](mailto:dfilmus@oei.org.ar)

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS

### African Development Bank (ADB)

Mr Sibry Tapsoba  
Lead Education Expert  
13, Av. Du Ghana  
BP. 323 1002  
Tunis, Belvédère  
Tunisia  
Tel: (216) 71 103 120  
Fax: (216) 71 832 737  
[s.tapsoba@afdb.org](mailto:s.tapsoba@afdb.org)

### Interamerican Development Bank (IDB)

Mr Daniel Malkin  
Deputy Manager  
Education, Science and Technology  
Subdepartment  
Sustainable Development Department  
1300 New York Avenue, N.W.

Washington DC 20577  
USA  
Tel: (1 202) 623-1908  
Fax: (1 202) 312-4261  
[DANIELMA@iadb.org](mailto:DANIELMA@iadb.org)  
[ROSARIORG@Contractual.iadb.org](mailto:ROSARIORG@Contractual.iadb.org)

### **Islamic Development Bank**

Mr Makha Ndao  
Senior Education Expert  
P.O. Box 5925  
Jeddah 21432  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Tel: (966 2) 646 67 19  
Fax: (966 2) 637 42 93  
[mkhndao@yahoo.com](mailto:mkhndao@yahoo.com)  
[mndao@isdb.org](mailto:mndao@isdb.org)

### **CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **EURODAD**

Ms Gail Hurley  
Policy Officer  
European Network on Debt and  
Development  
176 Avenue Louise  
1050 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: (32 2 ) 543 90 63  
Fax: (32 2 ) 544 05 59  
[ghurley@eurodad.org](mailto:ghurley@eurodad.org)

#### **AFRODAD**

Ms Moreblessings Chidaushe  
Programme Officer Lobby & Advocacy  
African Forum and Network on Debt  
and Development  
31 Atkinson Drive  
P.O. Box CY1517 Causeway  
Harare  
Zimbabwe  
Tel: (263 4) 778 531/36  
Fax: (263 4) 747 878  
[moreblessings@afrodad.co.zw](mailto:moreblessings@afrodad.co.zw)  
[mchidaushe1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mchidaushe1@yahoo.co.uk)

### **LATINDADD**

Mr Alberto Croce  
Presidente de Fundacion SES  
Miembro de LATINDADD  
Fundacion SES  
Avda de Mayo 1156 2° piso  
Ciudad de Buenos Aires  
Argentina  
Tel: (54 11) 4381-4225/-3842  
Fax: (54 11) 4381-4225  
[dir@fundses.org.ar](mailto:dir@fundses.org.ar)

### **Observers**

#### **JAPAN**

Ms Mariko Kobayashi  
First Secretary  
Permanent Delegation of Japan to UNESCO  
148, rue de l'Université  
75007 Paris  
Tel: (33 1) 53 59 27 00  
Fax : (33 1) 53 59 27 27  
[deljpn.px@unesco.org](mailto:deljpn.px@unesco.org)

#### **NORWAY**

Mr Alf Vestrheim  
First Secretary  
Permanent Delegation of Norway to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel : (33 1) 45 68 35 01  
Fax : (33 1) 45 67 92 03  
[a.vestrheim@unesco.org](mailto:a.vestrheim@unesco.org)

#### **ECUADOR**

Mr Marcelo Vazquez-Bermúdez  
Alternate Permanent Representative  
of Ecuador to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel : (33 1) 45 68 33 03  
Fax : (33 1) 43 06 49 06  
[m.vazquez@unesco.org](mailto:m.vazquez@unesco.org)

## **EL SALVADOR**

H.E. Mr Joaquín Rodezno Munguia  
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of El  
Salvador to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 34 03  
Fax: (33 1) 47 34 41 86  
[dl.e-salvador2@unesco.org](mailto:dl.e-salvador2@unesco.org)

Accompanied by :

Ms Rosa Ester Moreira De Lemoine  
Deputy Permanent Delegate

## **PERU**

Mr Mario Bustamante  
First Secretary  
Permanent Delegation of Peru to UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15  
Tel : (33 1) 45 68 29 33  
Fax : (33 1) 45 68 29 20  
[m.bustamante@unesco.org](mailto:m.bustamante@unesco.org)

## **GUATEMALA**

Ms Sonia Schoenstedt Briz  
Permanent Delegation of Guatemala to  
UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis, 75732 PARIS Cedex 15  
Tel : (33 1) 45 68 29 09/10  
Fax : (33 1) 43 06 69 61  
[schbriz@wanadoo.fr](mailto:schbriz@wanadoo.fr)

## **UNESCO SECRETARIAT**

### **Education Sector (ED)**

Mr Qian Tang  
DADG/ED

Mr Asghar Husain  
DIR/ED/PFS

Ms Paula Razquin  
ED/EFA/MRT

[p.razquin@unesco.org](mailto:p.razquin@unesco.org)

### **ED/UNP/EFA**

Ms Khawla Shaheen  
Mr Clinton Robinson  
Ms Sabine Detzel  
Ms Mari Yasunaga  
Mr Akihiko Noda  
Ms Lina Benete  
Ms Riho Sakurai  
Ms Kadidia Dramé  
Ms Mary Konin

### **External Relations and Cooperation Sector (ERC)**

Ms Anna Bonetti  
ERC/CFS/BLT  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 11 56  
[a.bonetti@unesco.org](mailto:a.bonetti@unesco.org)

Mr Shantha Retnasingam  
ERC/CFS/MLT  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 22 79  
[s.retnasingam@unesco.org](mailto:s.retnasingam@unesco.org)

Mr Ali-Mohamed  
ERC/CFS/MLT  
Tel: (33 1) 45 68 12 47  
[Am.sinane@unesco.org](mailto:Am.sinane@unesco.org)