

FROM DAKAR TO COCHABAMBA
(April 2000-April 2001)

**EDUCATION FOR ALL FOLLOW-UP
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Rosa-María Torres

Instituto Fronesis
Buenos Aires
www.fronesis.org

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The report

This “state of the art” of the Dakar follow-up of Education for All (EFA) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is based on various sources:

- a) a review of relevant national, regional and international documents, both in print and in the web;
- b) a questionnaire circulated (in mid-February 2001) to the e-mail list of signers of the *Latin American Statement on Education for All*. The questionnaire was organized around three items: *information* (has there been information about EFA following Dakar? How did they get informed? Do people search for such information?), *organization* (Have steps been taken, by governments, organizations of civil society and international co-operation agencies, towards the elaboration of EFA National Plans of Action?), and *participation* (Have OCS and these persons/institutions in particular, been involved in such mechanisms?);
- c) face-to-face or electronic interactions with key individuals from governments, OCS and international agencies.

This report takes into account the perspectives of this wide range of actors. It provides a regional overview and some specific references to countries for which we were able to get more information and from which we received replies to the survey: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The report also benefits from the author’s participation in two important regional meetings on education organized in this period by the Regional UNESCO Office (OREALC): the Seminar on “Prospects for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean” (Santiago, Chile, 23-25 August, 2000) and the PROMEDLAC VII Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education (Cochabamba, Bolivia, 5-7 March 2001).

The author

Rosa María Torres (Ecuador/Argentina). Co-Director, Instituto Fronesis. Researcher and international education adviser. She has been involved with EFA at the global, regional and national level. She participated at the Jomtien Conference (March 1990) and at the Dakar World Education Forum (April 2000), and is the author of *One decade of Education for All: The challenge ahead* (2000). She is part of the Group that promoted, and is in charge of the follow-up of, the Latin American Statement on Education for All.

E-mail: rmtorres@fibertel.com.ar

Web: www.fronesis.org

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One year has passed since the World Education Forum took place in Dakar (26-28 April, 2000). Here, goals agreed one decade earlier at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, March 1990) were essentially ratified and the deadline for accomplishing them was postponed until the year 2015. Such renewed commitment includes six goals and a series of agreed principles and mechanisms to ensure that this time those goals are accomplished (see Appendix).

What has been done at the regional and national level over this past year vis a vis such renewed commitment? In order to understand post-Dakar developments it is necessary to review pre-Dakar developments. On one hand, because **EFA follow up is not about Dakar+1 but rather about Jomtien +11**. On the other hand, because *basic education* efforts and goals antecede EFA and Jomtien. Between 8 and 10 years of universal and free general education, universal adult literacy, and improving the quality and efficiency of educational delivery, have been part of the educational reform agenda in this region for at least the last two decades. Jomtien's decade, which was supposed to focus on an "expanded vision" of *basic education*, in reality concentrated on primary education, and paid little attention to adult education, which was also part of such "expanded vision".

Thus, the EFA thrive and its follow-up must be viewed as a process and as a continuum that starts prior to 1990 and the Jomtien conference, and that – despite homogeneous and standardized recommendations for education reform by international agencies -- adopts specific characteristics and dynamics in this region and in each particular country. From a country perspective, and from the internal dynamics of education policy design and implementation, "Jomtien" and "Dakar" are essentially *international events and agreements*, reference external dates within such regional and national continuum.

Antecedents: The Jomtien decade and EFA in the LAC region

In general terms, Education for All (EFA) – the global initiative launched in 1990 under this name – was received with little interest in this region and was not appropriated as a meaningful framework for education policy formulation or for educational research and public debate. Although it was often mentioned in documents and meetings, only in a few cases EFA was explicitly adopted as a policy framework for national education reform -- notably in the case of Brazil and its Ten Year Plan of Education for All (1993-2003).

EFA re-surfaced for both governments and OCS when the 1990 decade was coming to a close: governments got busy preparing national reports for the regional and global EFA Assessment, while various OCS dedicated efforts to mobilizing public opinion and awareness around the Jomtien commitments.

Following the 1990 Jomtien Conference, the five EFA international partners (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and UNFPA) played different roles and engaged in different ways vis a vis EFA. UNESCO and UNICEF Regional Offices actively promoted EFA through various publications and meetings, often in coordination and under joint initiatives. The World Bank hardly mentioned EFA in its own policies and projects, and it continued to stress *basic* education as *primary* education. UNDP played its traditional coordinating role of UN agencies. Not many people associate UNFPA with EFA, given the generalized perception of EFA and basic education as related only to schooling and to the Ministry of Education.

UNESCO found it difficult to reconcile EFA - a global initiative - with the Major Project of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (MPE), a regional initiative (1981-2000) launched and coordinated by UNESCO, which was half way when EFA emerged and whose three goals anticipated some of EFA goals (Box 3). In fact, EFA and MPE remained very much parallel projects, the first coordinated from UNESCO-HQ in Paris and the second from UNESCO-OREALC in Santiago.

Over the 1990s, all countries were involved in education (school) reform processes, this time with heavy presence from the global and regional banks – World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – in terms of both loans and technical advice. EFA was not an explicit framework for such reform proposals, although the focus on basic education – and, more specifically, on primary education- was a generalized trend, together with the expansion of the number of years of compulsory education. “Improving the quality of education” and basic education as a “poverty alleviation” strategy were the mottos of the decade. Decentralization, community involvement in school, textbook production, and evaluation of results, were some of the key features recommended and financed by international agencies. However, the regional EFA final assessment report and meeting (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 10-12 February 2000) acknowledged that Jomtien goals had only partially been met. “Improving quality” and “improving learning” in particular, remain un-met goals and challenges – just as “alleviating poverty”.

Civil society remained generally distant from, and even greatly unaware of, EFA as a global, regional and national movement. The academic community did not pay attention to EFA, and EFA international and national agents did not attempt to reach such community (it must be noted that until very recently most international agencies associated “civil society” only with NGOs). Traditionally, higher education has been viewed as separate from “the school system.” EFA stressed, rather than bridged, that gap, inasmuch as basic education and higher education were presented as an either/or option, and were explicitly put to compete for attention and funds.

In the early 1990s, the NGO community, particularly that linked to adult education, approached the EFA documents with some interest. Over the decade there was increased direct or indirect involvement of NGOs in public education policies and programs. Also, adult education and many adult educators approached formal education and the school system. However, such trends were not necessarily or directly inspired in, or nurtured by,

EFA. Teachers, and the population in general, hardly knew – and know now- or had a clear idea of Education for All as a global initiative.

The “expanded vision of basic education” proclaimed at Jomtien did not materialize in this region -- and elsewhere. (Torres, 2000a) Essentially, EFA and *basic education* were reduced to children’s education, school education and more specifically primary education. (Box 1). In most countries in this region, *basic education* became equivalent with *compulsory* school education, and such compulsory period was extended to 8, 9 and 10 years. In some countries, this includes one year of pre-school, in others it includes what was earlier termed lower or junior secondary education. At this point, there is no consensual understanding of the term *basic education* and no possibility to compare it across countries in the same region.

Box 1

| EDUCATION FOR ALL | |
|---|---|
| PROPOSAL | RESPONSE |
| 1. Education for <i>all</i> | 1. Education for <i>children (the poorest among the poor)</i> |
| 2. <i>Basic education</i> | 2. <i>Schooling (and primary education)</i> |
| 3. Universalizing <i>basic education</i> | 3. Universalizing <i>access to primary education</i> |
| 4. <i>Basic learning needs</i> | 4. <i>Minimum learning needs</i> |
| 5. Focusing on <i>learning</i> | 5. Enhancing and assessing <i>school performance</i> |
| 6. Expanding the <i>vision of basic education</i> | 6. Increasing the <i>duration (number of years) of compulsory schooling</i> |
| 7. <i>Basic education as the foundation for lifelong learning</i> | 7. <i>Basic education as an end in itself</i> |
| 8. Enhancing the <i>environment for learning</i> | 8. Enhancing the <i>school environment</i> |
| 9. <i>All countries</i> | 9. <i>Developing countries</i> |
| 10. Responsibility of <i>countries (government and civil society) and the international community</i> | 10. Responsibility of <i>countries</i> |

Source: R.M.Torres, *One decade of Education for All: The challenge ahead, IIPE UNESCO Buenos Aires, 2000.*

The little interest deposited on the EFA global initiative in this region can be attributed to several facts.

1. Perceptions about the EFA platform and proposal

Novelty: There was a strong feeling that EFA brought nothing or little new to this region both in theoretical and practical terms. On the one hand, there was the reductionist and quantitative understanding of EFA already commented. On the other hand, the MPE was operating in the region since the early 1980s, and its three goals (which are included in EFA) were fully part of the regional and national education agendas. The EFA documents and platform were no intellectual challenge for the professional and academic community linked to education (UNESCO-OREALC/IDRC, 1993). The Latin American “*Popular Education*” movement also felt that much of what was claimed as innovative within EFA had been part of this movement for a long time. (CIDE-CEAAL, 1992)

Relevance: The relevance of the EFA platform for this region was already put into question at the regional preparatory conference for Jomtien, held in Quito in 1988. Here, several country delegations and speakers expressed their concern about EFA being understood as a “ceiling rather than a floor” – in a region which by 1990 had between 90% and 95% of primary school enrolment, parity between boys and girls in such enrolment (and an increasing concern on boys, in several countries, in terms of school enrolment, retention, repetition and learning achievement), and a considerable expansion of secondary and tertiary education. Understanding EFA as UPE (universal primary education) and UPE as universal *access* to primary education, and basic education as minimum education, while abandoning secondary and higher education, appeared and remains a major concern and a highly debated issue in this region.

Ownership: EFA was perceived from the beginning as an initiative that came from outside and that was promoted by international agencies. Teacher unions associated EFA specifically to the World Bank and opposed it from the start (Torres, 2000b). Except for the original Jomtien conference documents, which were translated and distributed in Spanish and Portuguese – the two main communication languages in this region - most EFA-related production and meetings were conducted in foreign languages, mostly English, and were thus not accessible for the majority of the population, including teachers, government officials and many academics and education specialists. Also, this region was under-represented and often absent from most international mechanisms and fora put in place for EFA follow up at the global level. National governments and Ministries of Education themselves were poorly informed and involved, and did little to disseminate the information even among Ministerial staff.

2. Competing and parallel international education initiatives

EFA was not the only, or even the most important, education international initiative in this region over the past decade. In fact, in the 1990s there were several supra-national education initiatives competing for attention, resources and visibility in the regional scenario, under the leadership of different – or the same – international agencies.

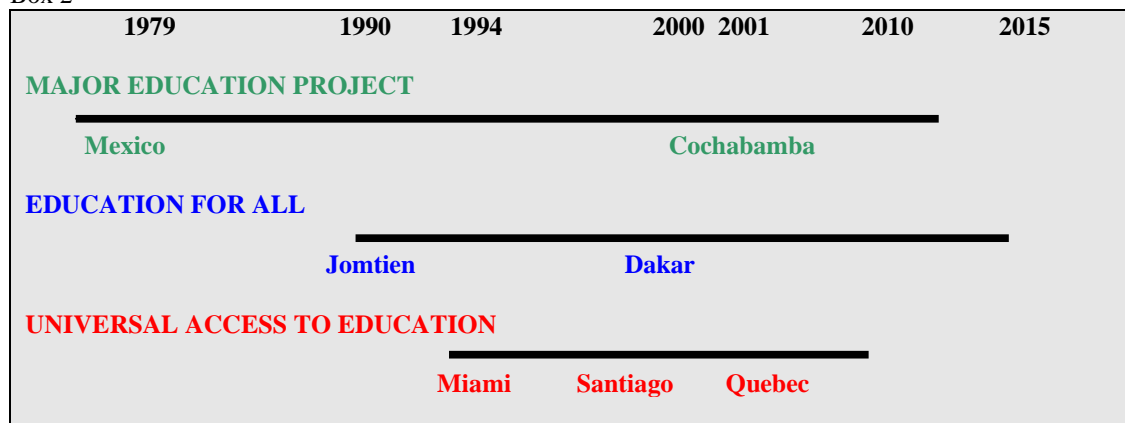
When EFA (1990-2000) was launched as a global movement, MPE (1979-2000) – a regional initiative – was in place and had been in operation for almost a decade. Both overlapped over the 1990s, came to a close in 2000 and have now been re-activated for another 15 years: EFA was assessed and its period extended in Dakar (26-28 April 2000) and MPE was assessed in Cochabamba (5-7 March 2001). Here, Ministers of Education together with UNESCO-OREALC decided to prepare a new 15-year regional education project, which will be ready, presented and discussed in early 2002. (Cochabamba Declaration).

Four years after Jomtien, in 1994, with MPE and EFA running in the region, a new initiative emerged, hemispheric in scope – North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean¹ - organized and led by the US government. The Plan “Universal Access to

¹ 34 countries participate in it. Cuba is the only country that was not invited to join the Summit and this hemispheric project.

Education” is part of a 26 point hemispheric agreement (the proposal for a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas – FTAA) reached at the Miami Summit (1994), followed by a second (Santiago, 1998) and a third (Quebec, 2001) summit. (Boxes 2 and 3)

Box 2



Source: R.M. Torres, *México, Jomtien, Miami: Dos décadas y tres proyectos para la educación en América Latina y el Caribe*. Buenos Aires, Instituto Fronesis, March 2001 (document in process, Spanish).

Box 3

Latin America and the Caribbean Education Initiatives and Goals (1980-2010)

| Major Project of Education 1979-2000 (Regional, Mexico) | Education for All 1990-2000 (Global, Jomtien) | Universal Access to Education 1994-2010 (Hemispheric, Miami) |
|---|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure schooling to all school-age children and offer them a minimum general education of 8 to 10 years. 2. Eliminate adult illiteracy before the end of the century and develop and expand the educational services for adults. 3. Improve the quality and efficiency of school systems by introducing the necessary reforms. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universal access to primary education. 2. Reduce adult illiteracy rates to half of the rate in 1990. 3. Expand early childhood care and development activities. 4. Improve learning results ensuring at least 80% of essential learning needs. 5. Expand basic education and training services for youth and adults. 6. Disseminate relevant information among the population through various means in order to improve the quality of their lives. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universal access to quality primary education, with a 100% completion rate. 2. Access to secondary education for at least 75% of young people. 3. Eliminate illiteracy. 4. Technical and professional training for workers and for teachers in particular. 5. Increase access and strengthen the quality of higher education. 6. Strategies to overcome the nutritional deficiencies of school-going children. 7. School decentralization with adequate financial support and participation of parents, teachers, community leaders and government officials. 8. Review and update existing training programs. 9. Create a hemispheric association that can act as a consultation forum for governments, NGOs, private entrepreneurs, donors and international organizations, to reform policies and allocate resources more efficiently. 10. Call the World Social Summit (1995) and the IV World Conference on Women (1995) to assume the issue of universal access to education. |

Source: Official documents from the three projects.

Post-Dakar Developments

MPE and EFA goals were not met by the year 2000. The spirit at the Dakar World Forum – and following such Forum -- was thus very different from that at the Jomtien World Conference ten years earlier and at the Mexico meeting where the MPE was decided upon, back in 1978. Exhaustion, inertia and disbelief are difficult starting points for activating both MPE and EFA phase II (2000-2015).

There is disappointment with the meager results of national reform efforts over the 1990s, globally and in this region in particular. The regional comparative evaluation of learning achievement (in language and mathematics among third and fourth graders) conducted in 1997 by UNESCO-OREALC in 13 Latin American countries, showed Cuba having the highest results (UNESCO-OREALC, 1998, 2000). Coincidentally, Cuba is the only country in the region that has not requested loans for its education reform and did not follow standard education reform recommendations.

There is disbelief in international commitments and agreements. The mechanism itself – international agreements, global plans – was put into question during the final decade assessment meeting of the nine most populous countries initiative, held in Recife, Brazil in February 2000.

But there are also new conditions and positive signs and trends. Electronic communication is now a powerful ally that was present at the time of Jomtien and throughout most of the past decade. E-mail and the Internet today facilitate what in the early 1990s meant lots of time, tons of paper and distribution problems. Agencies, governments and OCS are making use of these new tools. And this is already making an important difference between Jomtien follow-up and Dakar follow-up at the global, regional and national level.²

Little has happened in concrete terms that can be directly related to Dakar EFA follow up. National and regional dynamics, educationally and otherwise, have their own logic, and tend to move around immediate needs and realities, and thus around short-term visions and solutions. Since the late 1990s secondary education appeared as a critical issue and concern in most countries in the region. Education and education reform continue to move in the short-term logic. Holistic and strategic thinking, such as the one required by a 15-year project, is (again) not there (yet).

EFA international partners and other international cooperation agencies

Inter-agency coordination did not improve over the 1990s and remains a key battlefield for both agencies and countries if EFA is to be achieved globally, regionally and nationally. The fact that at the Dakar Forum governments delegated UNESCO the overall

² A recent Reuters Internet Report estimates that in 2000 there were 21 million Internet users in this region. Latin America' online population continues to grow and should nearly quadruple to 77 million by 2005. Latin Americans would account for 9 percent of all Internet users by 2005.

coordination of EFA, was not well received by other EFA partners. In practice, UNESCO is today pushing the EFA car not only without much cooperation, but also with low expectations of success, from its EFA partners. Each of them is busy with its own agenda and its own old or new “niche” within the EFA platform. UNICEF is fully engaged in the assessment and follow-up process of the World Summit for Children, strongly focused on its Girls Education Initiative, and preparing the UN Special Session on Children. While UNICEF works closely with the Spanish cooperation and the Iberoamerican Summits³, the World Bank is heavily engaged with the Hemispheric Summits and their follow-up. UNESCO has a minor role in both.

In fact, people from OCS who replied to the survey mention UNESCO (HQ, regional and national offices) as a source of information on EFA, only a few mention UNICEF, and none mentions the World Bank. UNESCO-HQ electronic bulletin reaches many people in the region, thanks to the dissemination efforts of various regional and national networks and institutions, and thanks to the fact that - for the first time within the EFA process since Jomtien – such bulletin is available in Spanish. UNESCO-OREALC has a web page in place, and a special site for EFA. However, and understandably, the main focus of attention of OREALC of the past few months was the final assessment of MPE and the organization of PROMEDLAC VII in Cochabamba to discuss such assessment.

Besides PROMEDLAC VII, another important meeting related to EFA coordination and follow up was an inter-agency meeting held in Washington (1-2 February 2001) aimed at ensuring better agency co-ordination and joint elaboration of a regional EFA strategy. This may be the first step towards effective agency co-ordination and collaboration, a largely neglected issue during the Jomtien decade.

Worth mentioning is also the proposal of a United Nations Literacy Decade, led by UNESCO/HQ, officially presented at the Cochabamba meeting and opened to wide consultation with civil society through e-mail and the Internet, in three languages (English, French and Spanish), between March and April 2001.⁴ The “renewed vision of literacy” proposed within such Decade has begun to be discussed in several national and international events related to education, and is being adopted as a framework for policy formulation by both governments and OSC.

Ministries of Education

“International initiatives” – as they are often called – and international meetings take up a lot of time of Ministers of Education and Ministerial staff. Since the late 1990s Ministries of Education have been very busy attending meetings, preparing plans and assessment reports for MPE, EFA and UAE, as well as the final decade assessment of UNICEF-

³ The Iberoamerican Summits (and the Education Conferences associated to such Summits) take place annually since 1991, under the auspices and cooperation of the Spanish government and the co-ordination of OEI (*Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos* – Organization of Ibero-american States). 21 Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries participate in this Ibero-american initiative, 19 of them located in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 2 in Europe – Spain and Portugal.

⁴ See: <http://www.unesco.org/education/litdecade>

related World Summit for Children. Such commitments often distract attention from, rather than respond to, domestic needs. The domestic education agenda may in fact have little to do with the international one.

Box 4 shows the international agenda of Brazil's Ministry of Education between January and November 2001. It may be illustrative of certain realities and trends of Ministerial activity within the region. In fact, many of the meetings enlisted here are common to the entire region, and many of them are related to the above-mentioned initiatives.⁵

Box 4

| Ministry of Education – Brazil International agenda (January – November 2001) | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| VI Meeting of CIPE | USA (Atlanta) | January 8-10 |
| World Economic Forum | Switzerland (Davos) | January 25-30 |
| Lunch with the new President of USA | USA (Washington) | January 31 |
| Summit of the Americas - XXI SIRG Meeting | USA (Washington) | January 29-February 1 |
| Education Conference –Harvard University | USA | March (to be confirmed) |
| UNESCO – PROMEDLAC VII | Bolivia (Cochabamba) | March 5-7 |
| Meeting on Education – IBM | USA (Miami) | March 9 |
| Seminar on Social Reforms | Chile (Santiago) | March 17 |
| IDB – Seminar on Secondary Education | Chile (Santiago) | March 17 |
| OEI – Executive Committee Meeting and XI Ibero-american Meeting on Education | Spain (Valencia) | March 26-27 |
| Visit to China to sign a bilateral agreement countries | China | April 9-13 |
| III Summit of the Americas | Canada (Quebec) | April 20-22 |
| III Meeting of Ministers of Education of CIDI-OAS. | Uruguay (Montevideo) | May or June (to be defined) |
| Meeting of the Brazil-Argentina Commission | Argentina (Buenos Aires) | May 20-22 |
| Mercosur Economic Forum | Argentina (Buenos Aires) | May 20-22 |
| SEDIFRALE XII – Globalization of Humanism | Brazil (Rio de Janeiro) | June 3-7 |
| Meeting of Mercosur Ministers | Paraguay (Asuncion) | June 29 (to be confirmed) |
| 31 General Conference of UNESCO | France (Paris) | October 22-November 10 |
| IV Conference of Ministers of Education of Portuguese-speaking Countries | Mozambique (Maputo) | November (to be confirmed) |

Source: http://www.mec.gov.br/home/internacional/Agenda_Inter.shtm

Web page, Ministry of Education Brazil, International Assistance, International Agenda (updated: 18 April 2001).

Original Portuguese. Our translation into English.

National EFA reports to be presented at the Dakar Forum were produced within Ministries of Education and/or with the assistance of external consultants. Only in a few cases MOEs took the initiative of organizing meetings to discuss such reports beyond MOE offices. In Mexico, for example, the Division of External Relations organized a

⁵ We highlight common regional activities in colors. We use yellow for those related to UNESCO, pink for those related to the Summits of the Americas and the US, green for those related to Spanish cooperation and OEI (Organization of Ibero-american States), and blue for the Inter-American Development Bank.

meeting with COMIE (*Consejo de Investigaciones Educativas*), an academic body formed by renowned education research centers and personalities, to discuss the national EFA report presented by Mexico at the Dakar Forum.

Guidelines for EFA National Plans were received at MOEs only in February-March 2001.⁶ Mechanisms for preparing such plans, in the participatory and consultative mode envisaged, were not in place until end of March.

It must be noted, however, that several countries have national education plans in place, some of which have resulted from dialogue and social consultation efforts, and most of which did not coincide with the Jomtien timeline and do not coincide now with the Dakar timeline. Colombia's much-debated National Ten Year Plan, for example, goes from 1996 to 2005. In January 2001 Brazil adopted a new Ten Year National Education Plan.⁷ Also, there are countries – for example Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador -- where social consultation mechanisms and national agreements for education are being prepared or are under way. Such processes are not specifically or necessarily related to EFA, or else they adopt EFA as one, among several, conceptual and policy frameworks. Boxes 5 and 6 provide brief information on the cases of Guatemala and Peru. In the case of Ecuador, an "Education Corner" (*Esquina de la Educación*) is being prepared and will take place in early July 2001. This process, which is meant as a first step towards the building of a National Education Agreement, is being organized within UNDP's Capacity 21 Program. The frameworks adopted are lifelong learning and the "renewed vision of literacy" envisaged within the proposed UN Literacy Decade.

Box 5

| Guatemala: Plan del Sector Educación 2000-2004 (Education Sector Plan 2000-2004) |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This Plan involved a wide consultation process (October 2000 and February 2001) that reached 333 municipalities and the 22 departments (provinces, states) of the country, through newly created Municipal and Departmental Councils. ▪ The three frameworks adopted in the preparation of such Plan (and quoted in the document) were: the Delors Commission Report to UNESCO on Education in the 21st Century, the Education for All initiative, and the (internal) Peace Agreements. ▪ The Plan includes six major policy areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equity 2. Interculturality 3. Quality/Excellence 4. Democratization 5. Stability 6. Sustainability (political, financial and institutional) ▪ The Plan addresses six priority goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bilingual literacy and post-literacy for the majority of the Guatemalan people. 2. Strengthen the trend towards universal primary education. |

⁶ Documents in English (original) usually arrive first. Translations into other languages take time and arrive later. Spanish is a must in the Latin American region, and Portuguese in the case of Brazil.

⁷ Such Plan was not the result of a social consultation or discussion process, and several aspects of it were vetoed and are being critically discussed by Brazilian OCS. See: <http://www.acaoeducativa.org/abacam.htm>

3. Generalize bilingual and intercultural education.
4. Change the school curriculum to ensure a quality, pertinent and relevant education.
5. Update, specialize and dignify the teaching profession.
6. De-concentration and decentralization of educational management.

Source: Guatemala-Ministerio de Educación, Plan del Sector Educación 2000-2004, 2000.

See: Guatemala-Ministry of Education web page: <http://www.mineduc.gob.gt/default.html>

Box 6

Peru:

Consulta Nacional de Educación (National Consultation on Education)

This Consultation is organized by the Ministry of Education and its Commission for a National Agreement on Education, and was launched on March 16, 2001. The end result of the Consultation will be a proposal for a National Agreement on Education that will be ready in July 2001 and will serve as the basis for delineating a National Education Project towards the year 2015.

The Consultation process adopts three modalities:

- a. Open consultation, via a structured survey around six questions (see below).
- b. Specialized consultation, addressed to specialized individuals and institutions.
- c. Regional consultations, taking place in the 24 states of the country.

The six questions are:

1. What do all Peruvians need to learn?
2. How should teaching been done in schools?
3. Beyond schools, what, where and with whom do we also learn?
4. How should education be managed?
5. What goals should be prioritized and how can we finance the education we want?
6. How can we make sure that we are reaching the proposed goals and the desired learning outcomes?

Source: Perú-Ministerio de Educación/Comisión para un Acuerdo Nacional por la Educación. Web site:

http://www.minedu.gob.pe/web/el_ministerio/que_hay_de_nuevo/acuerdo_por_educacion/presentacion.htm

Few Ministries of Education in the region have *active* information and communication strategies not only for wider, public dissemination, but also for their own staff. Some have printed or electronic bulletins or journals that are distributed to teachers and to the school system. Only a minority of those view such information beyond instrumental needs of the current reform process in each country. Also, and although most MOEs in the region have now web sites or are in the process of creating them, only few such web sites have information on EFA or direct links to EFA in the web sites of international EFA partners. Interestingly enough, all MOEs' web sites provide a link with the World Bank web site, but not all of them provide a link with UNESCO. Electronic communication has not been explored yet by MOEs and international agencies for regional or national information and consultation processes around education and EFA in particular, and remains thus an important future challenge vis a vis the social participation and consultation required.

Civil society

Beyond the differences between national contexts, informants from the various countries coincide in several aspects:

- Education in general gets little attention in the news and in public information and debate, vis a vis the many economic, social and political problems facing this region, and the commercial needs of media.
- There has been little public information around EFA both pre- and post-Dakar, particularly in mass media and especially on television. Journalists gave some coverage to Dakar as an event, but it disappeared from the public eye right after it was over.
- The great majority of people surveyed or interviewed learned about Dakar and EFA follow-up through e-mail and the Internet, and through four sources in particular: (a) the Latin American Statement on Education for All (which regularly disseminates information about EFA and other education initiatives and issues at both national, regional and global level), (b) CEAAL (Latin American Council for Adult Education, and its electronic bulletin and publications) and other national institutions linked to the Global Education Campaign in this region (such as *Ação Educativa* in Brazil, *CEBIAE* in Bolivia, and *Foro Educativo* in Peru), and (c) personal or institutional contact with UNESCO-OREALC. In the case of Brazil, an important source of information and contact mentioned is the Action Aid-supported National Campaign for the Right of Education.
- Some academic institutions and NGOs are playing a critical role in information dissemination and networking. Teacher associations have also been active in this respect, such as FUM (*Federación Uruguaya del Magisterio* – Uruguayan Teachers’ Federation) in Uruguay and *Colegio de Profesores* in Chile. Local, national and regional e-mail networks and virtual communities on education issues, operating in Spanish and/or Portuguese as communication languages, have mushroomed in the last few months in several countries and are increasingly inter-connected.
- There remains an eminently “passive” attitude towards information, participation and engagement. Most people who say they are informed about EFA and the Dakar follow-up process also acknowledge that they “receive” such information rather than actively look for it. Also, it becomes clear that being informed does not necessarily imply getting engaged. Many of those who say they are informed, also say they are not participating in any way in their own countries vis a vis education reform and EFA processes.

An “international initiative”: ownership and relevance as critical issues

For the most part, EFA – the concept, the global initiative under this label - was and remains alien in this region. *Jomtien* before and *Dakar* today are foreign names and distant cities. Most people in Latin America and the Caribbean probably do not know what those names are and what they stand for. And yet, international agencies and education specialists, internationally and nationally, often continue to refer to those names – *EFA*, *Jomtien*, *Dakar*, *basic education*- as if they were everyday talk and commonly shared notions within the education community.

If Jomtien's platform was viewed by many as simplistic and in need of further elaboration (UNESCO-OREALC/IDRC, 1993), Dakar's platform is viewed – not only in this region but elsewhere – as a poor version, a mere extension, of Jomtien. If Jomtien discourse was perceived as alien and inadequate to capture the context and moment of educational development in this region, Dakar discourse may be even more distant: there is stronger emphasis on girls and on primary education in a region where secondary education is already at the center of the educational problem and agenda, and where girls' enrolment and other quantitative indicators are not the most important concern regarding gender disparity. Also, higher education, which remains non-mentioned and not included within the EFA agenda, are at the very heart of educational debate in this region. Public universities in all countries are struggling with deteriorating conditions and meager budgets, which have a direct impact on the quality of professional education and of indispensable national research, as well as on teacher education and training, all of which contribute to the further deterioration of basic education. The holistic view of education as a system remains for the most part absent in national and international education policies, even within the framework of so-called "sector-wide approaches" currently being promoted.

EFA started and has remained associated with international agencies. Curiously enough, people think of EFA and other supra-national plans as "*international* initiatives", that is, as foreign and as other people's business. There is little reflection on the fact that such agreements are adopted by their/our own *national* governments. Often, people blame international agencies for the failure, and lose sight of the critical role of countries -- governments and civil societies – in shaping both success and failure. Most people, including top government officials and education specialists, are unaware of the important national differences that exist in the relationship between international agencies and national counterparts, and of the resulting differences in terms of what and how loans and grants are negotiated, and of what kind of education reform agenda is finally adopted and put in place.

Some promising paths

Since late 1990s – and perhaps accelerated in the post-Dakar period -- there are a number of promising signs emerging as favourable conditions for overcoming some past problems and errors.

- A better understanding of *civil society*, until very recently reduced to NGOs, particularly by international agencies and by NGOs themselves. The heterogeneity and complexity of concrete civil societies is finally beginning to be acknowledged, including the academic community, political parties, social movements, churches, private enterprise, teacher organizations, grassroots organizations, mass media and others. are finally acknowledged as being part of civil society. Traditional boundaries between governmental and *non*-governmental have eroded, for both the good and the bad reasons, and with both advantages and disadvantages. Many "NGO people" moved into government positions and vice versa. Linkages between the NGO and the academic community are strong in this region, and many "NGO people" are at the same time

university professors. Most middle-class professionals have been forced to get two or three jobs in the context of ever deteriorating job and salary conditions. Nationally, NGOs have engaged increasingly in policy dialogue, formulation and implementation. Internationally, financial and collaborative linkages between the NGO world and the international agencies has become increasingly visible.

▪ Wider networks and alliances Various factors are facilitating a wider understanding and practice of partnership, alliances, participation and consensus-building, among others: the blurring of conventional distinctions and either/or options, a more complex understanding of civil society and of educational change, increased acceptance of lifelong learning as an organizing education principle, and the rapid widespread of modern information and communication technologies. Teacher organizations are emerging as a new social and negotiating actor for education reform. Inter- and cross-sectoral policies and programs are becoming more frequent (from the State of Matto Grosso, in Brazil, for example, it is reported that EFA is placed at the center of the Earth Charter by education authorities and university staff). An adult education NGO network, such as CEAAL, is today engaged in EFA and in a global education campaign that claims not only for more and better (non-formal) adult education but for more and better education for ALL.

Several social watch mechanisms and processes around education have emerged since the early 1990s in the region, each of them with different characteristics, and are being expanded and replicated at both national, sub-national and regional level. Among the most important are:

- o *Foro Educativo*⁸ (Education Forum), a civil association formed in Peru in 1992 to formulate national educational policies and proposals on the basis of discussion and consensus-building;
- o *Foro Educativo Boliviano* (Bolivian Education Forum) created in Bolivia in late 1996, under the initiative of CEBIAE and the support of Acción Educativa-Bolivia, and inspired on the Peruvian Forum and the Colombian Popular Pedagogical Movement. It integrates various organizations of civil society including the Episcopal Education Commission, NGOs linked to the National NGO Coordination Network, the Bolivian Movement of Popular Educators, and primary and secondary school teachers and personnel. The Forum promotes pedagogical discussion, studies, consensus-building and policy dialogue with government authorities, and has been active around EFA and the Dakar follow-up.
- o *Observatorio Ciudadano de la Educación*⁹ (National Observatory for Education), a civil society created in Mexico in 1999, as an open forum for citizens to critically observe the development of education and government policies in this sector. It operates through a website and a fortnightly publication in the national newspaper *La Jornada*.
- o *Campanha Nacional pelo Direito à Educação*¹⁰ (National Campaign for the Right to Education), launched in October 1999, coordinated by Ação Educativa, a national NGO. The campaign aims at disseminating information and protecting the right to education as per the Brazilian constitutions and international agreements.

⁸ See: www.foroeducativo.org

⁹ See: www.observatorio.org

¹⁰ See: www.acaoeducativa.org/Campa.htm

- o *Pronunciamento Latinoamericano por una Educación para Todos*¹¹ (Latin American Statement on Education for All), emerged as a Latin American initiative on the occasion of, and as a response to, the Dakar World Education Forum (April 2000). The document has been signed to date by over 2000 people, coming from a wide political, social and institutional spectrum, including governments, civil societies and international organizations. It is a regional network that operates through e-mail and the web from two hubs, coordinated between Argentina and Mexico.

Three such national initiatives – those in Peru, Bolivia and Brazil – are today articulated to the Global Education Campaign supported and promoted by Oxfam, Action Aid and Education International.

- A better informed and more (pro) active civil society Civil society involvement in EFA and in education in general has been limited in the past, among others because of isolation and weak linkages among diverse constituencies and interest groups, but also because of lack of relevant and opportune information. Today, information about global, regional and national policies and programmes is much more accessible, not only through electronic but also through printed media. Web sites from international agencies and national governments contain important information on linkages, policies and programs. In some MOEs' web sites one can find even Ministers' CVs and daily agendas. However, some critical information (i.e. budgets, negotiation of loans and actual use of the money, etc.) remains inaccessible. Selecting and making sense of the information available, and disseminating it is part of the challenge, together with demanding further transparency and accountability from both governments and international agencies. Strengthening local and regional connectivity, as well as linkages with other regions in the South and in the North, is essential to the building of an informed and meaningful social participation in education.

In particular, teachers and teacher organizations are opening up to wider information, communication and knowledge systems. Teachers themselves are increasingly active in the production and dissemination of information and knowledge through their own publications and networks as well as in association with others. While in the past teacher representatives were generally absent (not invited) in specialized national and international fora, even in those where teacher issues were discussed, the situation is beginning to change -- for example, representatives from national and regional teacher organizations were present at the Ministerial meeting in Cochabamba.

- International cooperation as an issue for analysis, vigilance and debate There is growing awareness and criticism in the region in relation to the role of international agencies. The issue has been highlighted in the educational arena, particularly in relation to education reform processes conducted in the 1990s, and around three main topics: ownership, inter-agency coordination, and accountability.

¹¹ See: www.fronesis.org/prolat.htm and www.observatorio.org

“International cooperation” has become an issue in itself, a topic for research and analysis, and no longer something that is taken for granted. Theoretical and field studies have been and are being conducted by both national and international organizations. The homogeneous reform model applied in the region in the past few years is under question. Problems related to lack of inter-agency coordination, which were not visible or talked about, are now coming to the surface. Many critical voices call for a major re-thinking of the traditional donor agency/recipient country relationship, in the framework of a renewed North/South relationship.

Realities and pressure are beginning to force certain changes. Concrete steps towards better co-ordination and to the building of a unified education reform agenda include the recent Washington inter-agency meeting as well as the Cochabamba meeting and final Declaration, which made international cooperation a key and specific issue for discussion. The final point of such Declaration, signed by the Ministers of Education, states that

“The validity of these commitments and agreements demand that we maintain sound and positive relationships with international institutions that provide technical and/or financial support for education development projects in the region, encouraging responsibility and accountability of these institutions for the outcomes of their cooperation. Greater efforts should be made to ensure that these agencies respect the priorities, interests and characteristics of each nation by stimulating horizontal cooperation between countries.”

Conclusion: EFA follow-up and future challenges

It is too early to judge about the impact of EFA renewed commitments, and it is and will always be very difficult to discriminate what is related to Jomtien/Dakar and to the various other international events, declarations and initiatives, and what to the endogenous, objective and subjective realities, processes and dynamics taking place in the region and in each particular country. In any case, two issues are clear now:

- the education agenda, and within that the EFA agenda, needs to be interpreted and defined at both the regional and national level, so as to respond to the peculiarities of regional and country realities and needs. The six goals established at Jomtien and renovated at Dakar must be re-visited in every particular context and dynamically adapted to changing times and needs.
- EFA requires coordinated efforts both within and among countries, and within and among international agencies. Linking and coordinating the various international initiatives and projects under way in the region is a major responsibility of the international community, and especially of EFA partners: UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank. “EFA follow-up” means today following up the various initiatives dealing with basic education, both within governments, civil society and the international community. It is thus essential that the new regional education plan for the next 15 years, agreed upon by Ministers of Education in Cochabamba and which will be prepared by UNESCO and the Ministers in the next few months, is the new regional EFA plan, and not a separate, parallel plan. And it is essential that such regional plan, and the national plans related to it, engage a wide social consultation and mobilization process.

Moreover, the challenge is to make sure that the various regional and national initiatives and plans converge into one single, strong, coherent EFA Plan. International agencies, governments and civil societies have all a critical role in the coming months to ensure that will and efforts lead in this direction.

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Appendix

| GOALS | | HOW |
|--|---|--|
| 1990-2000 (Jomtien) | 2000-2015 (Dakar) | |
| 1. Expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children. | 1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. | - mobilise strong national and international political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and enhance significantly investments in basic education; |
| 2. Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or whatever higher level of education is considered as "basic") by the year 2000. | 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. | - promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies; |
| 3. Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e.g. 80% 14 year olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement. | 3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. | - ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development; |
| 4. Reduction in the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age cohort to be determined in each country) to, say, one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between the male and female illiteracy rates. | 4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. | - develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management; |
| 5. Expansion of provision of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity. | 5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. | - meet the needs of education systems affected by conditions of conflict and instability and conduct educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and help to prevent violence and conflict; |
| 6. Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all educational channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change. | 6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. | - implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education which recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices; |
| | | - urgently implement education programmes and actions to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic; |
| | | - create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning and clearly defined levels of achievement for all; |
| | | - enhance the status, morale and professionalism of teachers; |
| | | - harness new information and communication technologies to help achieve EFA goals; |
| | | - systematically monitor progress towards EFA goals and strategies at the national, regional and international levels; |
| | | - build on existing mechanisms to accelerate progress towards education for all. |