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BRIEF

Education for All and Children with Disabilities: International Policy and Practice

Issue Addressed

The right to education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society. Half a century ago the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) asserted education to be this basic human right, a right that was reaffirmed in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). Importantly, the *Convention* also recognized that there are particular problems to overcome in order to truly ensure educational opportunities for all children.

For this reason, the *Convention* has been followed up in recent years by a movement that has sought to turn the educational rights of the child into a reality. This movement, Education for All (EFA), was launched at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 by the major international and bilateral organizations and was attended by almost all of the nations of the world.

In the year 2000, a decade later, 176 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal at the World Forum on Education for All to review the progress made towards this goal. While, in general, countries have worked to address the educational rights of children and 10 million more children attend school each year, the tendency of countries to

focus on the “easy to reach” and neglect those excluded from basic education for social, economic, or geographic reasons was notable in the review of progress. For example, 98% of children with disabilities in developing countries do **NOT** attend schools. As a result, the forum declared that Education for All must take into account the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, which includes, among others, those with special learning needs and assure that Education for All really means **ALL**.

Operationalizing EFA

To achieve the major Dakar goal of assuring quality primary education for all by the year 2015 and other more specific goals, a broad international strategy has been put in place. The heart of this strategy is at the country level and embedded in national EFA plans for action (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). Each national EFA plan must specify reforms addressing the EFA goals, establish a sustainable financial framework, and be time-bound and action oriented.

Importantly, the Dakar Framework is a collective commitment; countries must be supported by regional and international agencies and

institutions to reach EFA goals. To coordinate the commitment of these efforts a structure has been put in place that links national education development plans to regional frameworks for action and to an international structure of multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, lending institutions, and NGO networks. This international structure is coordinated by a Secretariat at UNESCO, an EFA Working Group, and a High Level Group, all playing a role in assuring:

- ♦ Planning,
- ♦ Communication and Advocacy,
- ♦ Financing,
- ♦ Monitoring and Evaluation, and
- ♦ International and Regional Mechanisms.

An additional resource to countries is the Flagship programs that are a structured set of activities carried out by voluntary partners to eliminate specific obstacles to achieving Dakar goals through targeted and coordinated actions. These programs assist countries with their national educational plans and provide a focus for a particular aspect of EFA in terms of advocacy, information exchange, advice, and monitoring of progress. Currently there are flagship programs related to girls' education, school health, HIV-AIDS, literacy,

emergency situations, early education, quality education, and, most recently, inclusion and disability.

The Flagship on Education for All and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion

This *Flagship on Education for All and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion* was established in the year 2002 to act as a catalyst to ensure that the right to education and the goals of the Dakar Framework are realized for individuals with disabilities. This flagship is based on the principle that the right to education is universal and must extend to all children, youth, and adults with disabilities as articulated in a number of internationally approved declarations, including the *World Declaration for Education for All* (1990), the *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability* (1993), the *UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (1994), and the *Dakar Framework for Action* (2000).

The *Flagship on Education for All and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion* has been formed by an alliance of diverse organizations, including global disability organizations, international development agencies, intergovernmental agencies, and experts in the fields of special and inclusive education from developed and developing nations. The flagship seeks to unite all partners in its effort to reach out to children, young people and adults with disabilities, and to promote solutions that can translate

universal rights into inclusive realities. The Flagship Secretariat is housed in UNESCO.

The Goal of the Flagship has been agreed to as follows:

Recognizing the universal right to education, the Flagship seeks to unite all EFA partners in providing access to and promoting completion of quality education for every child, youth, and adult with a disability.

In order to reach this goal, the flagship will:

- ◆ Have the full participation of persons with disabilities and families in the design of all Flagship activities.
- ◆ Promote the full participation of persons with disabilities and families in the development of policies and practices related to the education of persons with disabilities at the national, regional, and global levels.
- ◆ Seek to ensure that all governmental entities, donors, and NGO's endorse the universal right of education for all children, youth, and adults with a disability.
- ◆ Act as a catalyst to fully incorporate the Flagship Goal into national plans of action and regional policies.
- ◆ Work in partnership with all other EFA Flagships to fully endorse and incorporate the right of educating every person with a disability into their efforts.
- ◆ Mobilize resources in support of the Flagship Goal through obtaining commitment of new resources from national and international entities and leveraging existing EFA resources.

- ◆ Seek to ensure that the EFA Monitoring Process includes specific quantitative and qualitative statistics and indicators related to persons with disabilities and documentation of resources allocated to the implementation of EFA for these individuals.
- ◆ Identify and disseminate effective practices and stimulate research and studies related to the Flagship Goal to include such areas as:
 - ◆ Quality teacher education,
 - ◆ School organization including adequate and accessible facilities,
 - ◆ Curriculum and pedagogy, and
 - ◆ Assistive devices and appropriate materials.
- ◆ Promote the right of every child and youth with a disability to express his/her view pertaining to his/her education and life skills as defined by Article 23.1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mapping International Commitment to the Dakar Goals: EFA Donor and International Organization Assistance

In order to support a comprehensive strategy for Education for All (EFA), it is important to know how multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental organizations and agencies are supporting the implementation of EFA action plans in nations requiring assistance. In order to support the work of *The Flagship on Education for All and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards*

DONOR AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT FOR THE DISABILITY DIMENSION OF EFA

COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION(S)*	COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION(S)*	COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION(S)*
Albania	UNICEF	Indonesia	Japan Norway	Niger	Action Aid
Algeria	UNICEF	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	UNICEF	Pakistan	Japan Save the Children
Armenia	UNICEF	Ireland	Save the Children	Paraguay	Japan
Azerbaijan	UNICEF	Jordan	Japan UNESCO UNICEF	Peru	World Bank
Bangladesh	Japan	Kazakhstan	UNESCO UNICEF	Philippines	Japan
Bhutan	UNICEF	Kenya	IPEC Japan	Saudi Arabia	Japan
Bolivia	Japan	Kyrgyzstan	UNESCO	South Africa	Denmark Japan Sweden
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Finland Italy UNESCO World Bank	Laos People's Democratic Republic	Japan Save the Children Sweden UNESCO	Sri Lanka	UNICEF
Botswana	Int. Amer. D. Bank	Lebanon	Save the Children UNICEF	Sudan	UNESCO
Brazil	Japan	Lesotho	UNICEF	Swaziland	Japan Save the Children
Bulgaria	Save the Children	Malawi	Japan	Syrian Arab Republic	Japan
Cambodia	Japan Sweden UNESCO	Malaysia	Japan	Tajikistan	Save the Children
China	Japan Save the Children UNESCO	Mali	SIDA World Bank	Thailand	Japan UNESCO
Colombia	Japan	Mexico	Japan	Tunisia	Italy
Dominica	Japan	Mongolia	Japan Save the Children	Uganda	Denmark
Egypt	UNESCO	Morocco	Save the Children UNESCO	Uzbekistan	Save the Children
Eritrea	Denmark	Mozambique	Denmark Japan	Viet Nam	Save the Children
Ethiopia	Japan	Myanmar	Japan Save the Children	Yemen	UNESCO
Georgia	UNICEF	Nepal	Denmark Finland Japan Save the Children	Yugoslavia	Finland UNICEF
Guinea	Action Aid Japan World Bank			Zambia	Denmark Finland
Haiti	Save the Children			Zimbabwe	Save the Children
India	Action Aid Canada Japan				

*Multilateral, bilateral (listed by country), and non-governmental donor and international organizations/agencies.

Inclusion with countries, it is particularly important to understand the international commitment to the area of disability.

A plan to gather this information was initiated in January 2002. Using *The Dakar Framework for Action*, a matrix was developed to highlight efforts directed at specific EFA goals including disability. A preliminary group of 24 agencies/organizations were contacted by e-mail, fax, mail, and telephone to complete the matrix. To date, 23 agencies/organizations have provided information. The matrix is considered to be a living document. Additional donors and international organizations will be added over time and the matrix will be updated regularly.

The resulting matrix, *EFA Donor and International Organization Assistance by Thematic Areas*, (Magrab, 2002) is a *preliminary* attempt to document the international assistance effort. It displays the array of donor and international organization activity in each of the member nations of the United Nations. This matrix serves as a basic directory of international support for EFA from multilateral donors, bilateral donors, and non-governmental organizations.

While the matrix is far too lengthy to summarize in this brief, the following represents a summary of the donor and international agency assistance to the disability area. It is noted that many countries do not receive any assistance in this area and a number of donor and international organizations do not target funding towards this area.

References

- Magrab, P. (2002). *Mapping of Donor Assistance by Country. In An International Strategy to Put the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All into Operation* (pp.40-44). Paris, France: UNESCO
- Magrab, P. (2002). *EFA Donor and International Organization Assistance: Multilateral Donors, Bilateral Donors, and Non-Governmental Organizations*. Paris, France: UNESCO.

Additionally, one of the limitations of the survey, lack of information on level and duration of funding, may even further minimize the funding effort regarding the area of disability. Given that 98% of children with disabilities do not attend schools in developing countries, this matrix points to the need to mobilize resources to create effective educational opportunities for children with disabilities that foster inclusive communities and social justice. Translating the universal right to education into individual realities will require the coordinated commitment of the entire international community.

PARTICIPATING DONOR AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Multilateral Organizations

European Commission
UNFPA
UNESCO
UNICEF
ILO
WHO
World Bank

Regional Organizations

African Development Bank
Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)

Bilateral Donors

(Agencies for International Development)

Canada (CIDA)
Denmark (DANIDA)
Finland (FINIDA)
France
Italy
Japan
Netherlands
Norway (NORAD)
Sweden (SIDA)
United Kingdom (DFID)
United States (USAID)

NGOs

Action Aid Alliance
CARE
Save the Children

This brief describes a special international effort of the Consortium related to improving systems of services and supports for children with disabilities and focuses on the right of all children to an education, as a critical underlying principle. Representing the Consortium for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, Dr. Magrab is a member of the International Working Group on Disability and Development (IWGDD), a group of donor, governmental, and non-governmental organizations and agencies whose mission is to ensure that the rights and concerns of individuals with disabilities are fully integrated into the agenda of donor and other organizations, with focus on developing countries and countries in transition. NIDRR and OSERS are among the member agencies of the IWGDD. The work discussed in this brief emanates from the IWGDD's interest in assuring that children with disabilities are prominently addressed in the international Education for All Agenda, which was reaffirmed in 2000 in Dakar, Senegal at the World Education Forum by 180 nations. Dr. Magrab was a member of the United States delegation to Dakar and a member of the International Strategy Task Force for Dakar Follow-Up. Her work on an international level is an expression of the Consortium's priority to provide access to all services and supports, including education, for children with disabilities and special health care needs.



For further information on The Consortium for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs, its partners or projects, please go to the consortium website at: www.consortiumnrrt.org



This project is supported by Grant H133B001200 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education.

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