

OSCE Conference “ Education: Investment in Future

Tashkent, April 5, 2004

“Every child, youth and adult has the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term – an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be”.

Education is a fundamental human right and is a vital aspect of the transition to the future material welfare of individuals – their ability to earn in the labour market, to cooperate across boundaries. EFA is important to the development of all facets of human well-being whether these are conceived in terms of human rights, human capabilities or development opportunities. The Central Asian republics have inherited the legacy of the Soviet Union: subordinate individual rights and a biased education system.

They are now facing the challenges of building a society based on democratic and human rights principles, re-orienting policies to sustainable solutions to social problems.

1. Specific Aspects of the CA Education System

The total population of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is over 27 million people. The national educational systems have shared common difficulties in maintaining their educational systems through recent periods of extreme fiscal pressure. The CA countries inherited former Soviet Union educational system which reflected in both high intake and high gross enrolment rates (1990s):

- Primary school enrolment was 88.5% (89% for males, 88% for females)
- Adult literacy rate was 99.65% (99.7% for males and 99.4% for females)
- Little gender disparity over the recent decade

But as the new century approached, more and more debates appeared among politicians, educators, community leaders, parents as a result of increasing frustration with formal, uniform system of education in CA. The education systems in CA have not met many expectations placed upon them by countries in transition – to promote change, to contribute within the regions for skill-based, high-technology economic growth.

Facilities and books are often in short supply, teachers – undertrained and underpaid, curricula – outdated. The CA countries are now in the process of reviewing and restructuring of their systems of education (Concept Development of Education System in Kazakhstan, Early Childhood Development and Education in Rural Areas in Kyrgyzstan, the National Sector Development Plan, content of school textbooks in Tajikistan).

2. Education in Central Asia: Major problems.

- 20 million children in CA pitched into poverty
- pre-school enrolment dropped to 15%
- upper secondary school enrolment fell to under 50% in Tajikistan, 65% in Kazakhstan, 75% in Kyrgyzstan

- the non-attendance rate is becoming higher

A Comparison of Educational Indicators

KAZAKHSTAN	1990	2002
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>ECCE</i>	72,3	13
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>Primary Education</i>	87,3	96,2
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>Secondary Education</i>	98,0	87,0
<i>Post-secondary /Vocational Schooling</i>		68
<i>Tertiary Education</i>		31
KYRGYZSTAN		
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>ECCE</i>	33,5	13,7
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>Primary Education</i>	99,9	91,1
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>Secondary Education</i>	100	82,0
<i>Post-secondary /Vocational Schooling</i>		26,4
<i>Tertiary Education</i>		41
TAJIKISTAN		
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>ECCE</i>	15,8	8,1
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>Primary Education</i>	91,0	99,9
Gross Enrolment ratio for <i>Secondary Education</i>	99,9	76,0
<i>Post secondary/Vocational Schooling</i>		23,1
<i>Tertiary Education</i>		14

Gross enrolment ratio (GER) – number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age groups

Source: “EFA Global Monitoring report 2002”

All CA countries face **major challenges**:

- quality of education , especially in rural areas;
- access to early childhood programmes;
- management of educational systems; monitoring of learning outcomes;
- production of textbooks;
- vocational education and life skills training for young people;

The development of education systems and hence of human resources with economic creativity is crucial to the CA countries’ sustainable development.

A transition from the “command and control” mentality to “a facilitate and service-oriented” approach is the key component to educational reform in CA..

There is clearly the need of reforming in different areas of education:

- decentralization, introduced in legislative structures of education;
- capacity building to improve skills in planning, management, attitude change;
- improving of data collection and analysis for monitoring and evaluation;

The common challenge for all CA countries is the need for political leadership to prioritize education and carry through whatever policy changes are appropriate to a country’s situation.

3. EFA National Action Plan and Millennium Development Education-related Coals in Central Asia

All CA countries have committed themselves to six objectives of Education for All approved at Dakar World Forum and to the Millennium Development Goals, and responded to them according to their own situation in educational system. In each of the three countries a commitment is made to:

- Expansion of early childhood education;
- Full access to general education with access on minorities, disadvantaged and vulnerable children;
- Quality improvement measures including upgrading of facilities, provision of learning materials, teacher training and/or retraining, and development of assessment systems;
- Gender balance in general education;
- Providing more continuing education alternatives and expanding life skills training for youth and adults;
- Improving education management and increasing financing for education.

At the same time all CA countries need technical assistance to move from situation analysis of their educational systems to actions of highest priorities. It includes highlighting major strategic directions, identifying specific targets and possible models for further development of their educational systems to meet the priorities.

In all CA countries the process of formulation and implementation of educational policies is hindered by budgetary restraints, shortcoming in the area of effective legislation, infrastructure, equipment and supplies, qualified staff and training.

4. The Role of UNESCO in the CA countries:

- coordination,
- strengthening partnerships,
- advocacy and communication,
- monitoring,
- capacity building

UNESCO works to encourage the renewal of education systems in the CA countries to make them more performing and inclusive, to build up knowledge societies, grounded upon such values as equity, respect for cultural diversity and protection of common goods.

It uses multisectoral and cross cutting themes to impact poverty alleviation, sustainable development and the promotion of universal values.

UNESCO sees the poverty and education in CA as interrelated process: regression in the education sector, especially basic education, is worsening the poverty situation, resulting in the rise of juvenile delinquency, unemployment, anti-social behaviour.

Educational development

Government initiatives towards improving their education systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan provide entry point for UNESCO and respective donors to contribute to the process of development and reforming in the areas of **short-term and long-term impacts**.

Long-term interventions:

- creating organizational, social, intellectual resources, incentives to influence educational policy and legislation (raising awareness, capacity building activities)
- providing assistance in strategic and innovative conceptions;
- creating environment for acceptance of interventions by national educational authorities (social mobilization, advocacy , activities)
- broadening co-operation of NGOs, communities, civil society, government structures;
- creating policy dialogue.

Short-term interventions:

- promoting monitoring system for learning outcomes;
- improving learning-teaching environment;
- providing training for target groups;, updating knowledge and skills

Implementation Steps:

UNESCO's main form of intervention at the country level is the provision of policy and strategic advice to complement the efforts of other agencies to plan and fund specific programmes within EFA goals.

For the biennium 2002-2003 UNESCO strategy followed two main directions:

- *Basic education*: coordination of the follow-up of the Dakar Framework of Action through dissemination of information, by helping member states to build and implement National and Regional strategies, promote EFA partnerships, build innovative methods of education and delivery systems.
- *Build Knowledge societies*: promotion of new approaches to quality of education as the education for a culture of peace, human rights, technical and vocational education; ICTs for education, sustainable development.

Main Activities in 2002-2003:

- In 2003, the UNESCO Cluster Office for Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan initiated a project for "Technical Assistance to Countries Implementing EFA National Plans of Action". The project was to

provide the countries with advice and guidance in organizing EFA activities such as workshops, case studies and seminars in priority areas.

- During the 2nd Central Asian Education Forum, held in Bishkek on 5,6 June 2003, participants identified EFA thematic areas of priority for UNESCO assistance. These areas were life skills and vocational education (Kazakhstan), adult education (Kyrgyz Republic), and girls education and adult education (Tajikistan).
- The support was provided for the **Central Asian Education Forum thematic groups** to assist the three countries in understanding needs and defining actions in areas they identified as priorities.
- Advocacy activities included roundtables in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan to promote EFA and the EFA action plans, production and distribution of advocacy materials (posters, calendars) publicizing EFA goals.
- Capacity building and teacher training workshops, case studies and seminars in priority areas contributed to raising awareness and provision of policy dialogue with decision makers, establishment of monitoring mechanisms, development of educational programmes for children, parents and teachers.
- Support has been provided to CLC centers to set up a system of social partnerships providing access to life skills and livelihood education
- The coordination and technical assistance have been provided in the development of EFA statistics, promotion of human rights, peace and democratic principles, identifying and dissemination of best practices.
- Promotion of democratic and human rights principles, fostering respect of universal values and attitudes was ensured through training courses for youth mobile teams and youth leaders in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan.
- Conferences, research, mass media campaigns have been organized to raise public awareness on the situation of neglected and street young children in the Kyrgyz republic to contribute to poverty eradication through social integration of the marginalized homeless young people.

5. Partnerships:

- NGOs
- Communities and civil society
- International Donors Group
- UN agencies
- National Commissions for UNESCO, UNSECO Chairs
- Government, educational authorities

The areas of collaboration with partners of the CA cluster countries in 2002-2003:

- Strengthening of inclusive approaches to education;
- Promotion of literacy and non-formal education
- Preventive education in response to HIV/AIDS pandemic;
- Information and communication technologies for education;
- Promotion of technical vocational education and training;
- Education for culture and peace, promotion of human rights.

Collaboration with partners is aimed to build support for the EFA goals and draw upon the expertise of informed stakeholders and professionals.

6. UNESCO Future actions and support

The most important areas of support of UNESCO will be provided in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, policy dialogue and resource mobilization to improve the education systems and policies in the CA countries.

Youth participation will be ensured to build partnerships between young people and decision makers in the domains of secondary and higher education reforms, prevention of HIV/AIDS, science education, promotion of the culture of peace, human rights and social development.

UNESCO will map in future years the extent to which the shift in policy and practice in support of EFA, MDGs is taking place in the CA countries, analyzing the achievements and the progress of individual countries, educational policies and strategies that are making a difference and investment in the sustainable development.

Main Lines of Activities for 2004-2005:

- Promotion of access to primary education for disadvantaged groups of children
- Promotion of the development of policies to improve access to ECCE in CA
- Advocacy for Girls' Education and Gender parity
- Support of Life-skills programmes for youth, especially in rural areas
- Promotion of Non-Formal Education
- Promotion of Education for Sustainable Development
- Promotion of improvement of secondary education, technical and vocational education and training
- Strengthening of national capacities to measure and monitor quality of education and learning achievements
- Promotion of Preventive education
- Organizing Central Asian Education Forum
- Enhancing involvement of civil society and NGOs in National Plans implementation
- Strengthening of EFA communication, advocacy and information dissemination
- Promotion of human rights education, democratic and human rights principles.