

Quality Learning and Education

At the core of Sustainable Development

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Discussions on the post 2015 development agenda are now well underway, and while education receives some prominence, there needs to be a **firmer commitment to education, as fundamental human right, and recognition that education is an indispensable requirement for realizing other human rights**. Education should be acknowledged as a core enabler of sustainable development, essential to addressing current and future global challenges, and the achievement of all other development goals. As such, in the post 2015 agenda, the goals and objectives in education must be based on a **holistic vision of education, encompassing all forms of education and training, formal and non-formal**.

The UN Secretary General's Report (July 2013) refers to '*quality of education and lifelong learning opportunities as one of the key transformative and mutually reinforcing actions to meet the post 2015 vision*'. Elaborating on what this action entails, the Report explains that the '*young should be able to receive high quality education and learning from early childhood development to post primary schooling including not only formal schooling but also life skills and vocational education and training*'.

While appreciating the priority on the quality of education and lifelong learning, we are concerned about its limited interpretation. Defining education goals at the global level is a necessary, yet complex process, and therefore requires the participation of the broadest possible constituencies, from the local to the national and regional levels. The goals need to respond to diverse contexts in a rapidly changing world, and **address the learning needs of different age groups – children, youth and adults**. The goals should therefore encompass an expanded approach to quality education which goes beyond simply a focus on the efficiency of a system. This expanded approach would refer to the interactive and continuous process of learning throughout life. The approach needs to take into consideration learners, teachers, parents and educational institutions. Goals therefore must reflect this multi-dimensional perspective and should not be selected solely on their measurability, since some crucial dimensions to learning cannot be, and will never be, measurable.

Education goals and objectives need to take into account poverty, the fragility of many countries and disparity in its many forms. For example, the interaction of class and gender attitudes limits the access of girls and women to education and learning opportunities. The approach to education needs to address the fact that vast numbers of marginalized and vulnerable groups are still denied learning opportunities and access to formal education, and that non-formal education plays a crucial role, and needs to be supported.

UNESCO (2013) estimates that there are 57 million out of school children and 774 million adults- majority of them women- who do not have the literacy skills. Youth and adult literacy, and skills development programs build the foundations for basic and continuous learning. For many of the excluded, including out of school children who will never go to school, such non formal education programs are often the first and only chance of education. **Unless these alternative programs are sufficiently recognized and adequately financed, those excluded will continue to be denied their right to quality education.**

The discussion and consequent decision on the post 2015 education goal/s and targets need to take into account the results of EFA country and regional reviews and assessments which have not yet been completed. These reviews and assessments will allow governments and their partners to reflect on their realities and based on these, agree on a vision of the role of learning and education in their countries' development. From these, nations could forge consensus on the education goals that could best serve its children, its youth and adult population.

As a public good, education- is valuable in its own right and from which individuals, communities and societies should all benefit. Therefore, governments need to allocate predictable resources to make sure that it is able to drive sustainable development in their countries.

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