

Education for All

Finnish Development Cooperation
in the Education Sector





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The right to education: an unattained goal

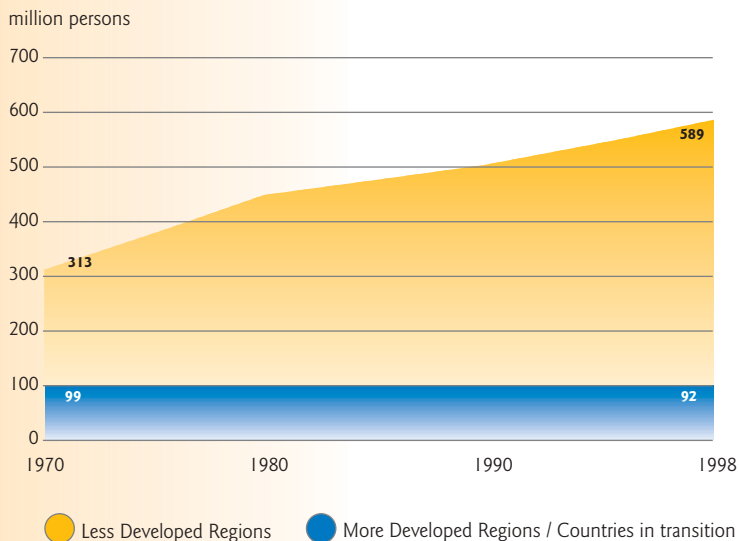
Education is an internationally acknowledged human right. However, millions of children and adults the world over are denied access to this right. In the developing countries, one out of three adults is illiterate, and the world has an estimated total of 855 million illiterate people. About 113 million children who should be in primary school are currently growing up without the benefit of basic education. The situation is especially serious among girls, because they account for two-thirds of the children missing out on schooling. In addition, some 150 million children start school but drop out before having acquired the essential literacy, numeracy and life skills.

Poverty is one of the largest obstacles to children's education. Even if schooling itself were provided free of charge, the other related costs may prove to be insurmountable. Many parents cannot afford to buy, for example, the obligatory school uniforms or books for their children. Moreover, many poor families depend on their children's work contribution, and the time spent at school is time not spent earning. It is the vicious circle of poverty.

Educational opportunities are not equitably distributed. When the choice concerning children's education has to be made, poor families tend to favour boys. Investing in girls' education does not seem to be worthwhile, especially if girls marry at an early age.



GLOBAL TRENDS IN ENROLMENT NUMBERS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION 1970-1998



(Source: Unesco)

The situation is not altogether as bleak as this, since much progress has been made in providing learning opportunities worldwide. During the last five decades, school attendance has increased, and the number of children and young people going to school has increased considerably. For instance, the number of children enrolled in primary school has doubled since the 1960s – though, of course, there are more children in the present-day world as well.

The opportunity to go to school varies appreciably in different parts of the globe. For example, in Latin America, the Caribbean and East Asia, the goal of universal access to basic education has almost been achieved, whereas in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia this goal is still far off. The global poverty problem will persist as long as a part of the world population lacks access to education.

Education: a key to sustainable development

Education impacts on development in many ways. Productivity increases as the level of education rises, and educated people are often healthier and better nourished. Educated mothers have fewer children, a fact that, in turn, affects many other aspects of their lives. Schooling benefits both the people receiving education and their families. From the societal viewpoint, education is an investment society cannot afford to overlook. Studies have established that basic education, in particular, promotes social, economic and political development.

Equal educational opportunities and equitable treatment of pupils at school are cornerstones of equality in society at large. Basic education benefits the underprivileged, who learn skills and competencies to improve their status and quality of life. Societies that fail to provide all citizens with education endanger their prospects for development.

Yet, it is not enough that children merely go to school, because attendance itself does not guarantee adequate learning. Another important consideration is the quality of education. Many countries are able to invest only minimal sums in the education sector. When teachers, classrooms, books and other learning materials are in short supply, the quality of education cannot be good, either. Dropping out and repetition are common in many developing countries, facts that in part reflect the poor quality and inefficiency of education systems. In Africa, for example, calculations put the repetition rate at 25 per cent.

High-quality basic education is a prerequisite for guaranteeing that everyone acquires the necessary skills. These include the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as essential life skills.



The goal: education for all



At the global level, development of educational policy is guided by the World Declaration on Education for All and the associated Framework for Action, approved in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990.

Jomtien was the venue for the first World Conference on Education for All, an event that can be described as a milestone in the education sector.

The 154 participating countries were unanimous that education is crucial to development. Education was considered the single most important factor in reducing poverty, protecting the environment, control-

ling population growth and promoting equality, human rights and democracy. The process that was launched during this conference has received less attention in the industrialized world, while in the developing countries it has a much more central role.

The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) gives a very broad definition for the area covered by basic education. The fundamental idea behind the Declaration is that all individuals – children, young people and adults alike – have the right to education. In practice, however, interpretation and implementation of the Declaration pertains almost entirely to primary education provided at school.

In addition to Jomtien, education has been at the forefront in many other global and regional conferences. For example, the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, set the goal of ensuring equal and free basic education for all. However, the targeted timeframe, the millennium, proved to be overly optimistic, and subsequent international development objectives have adopted the year 2015 as the new deadline.

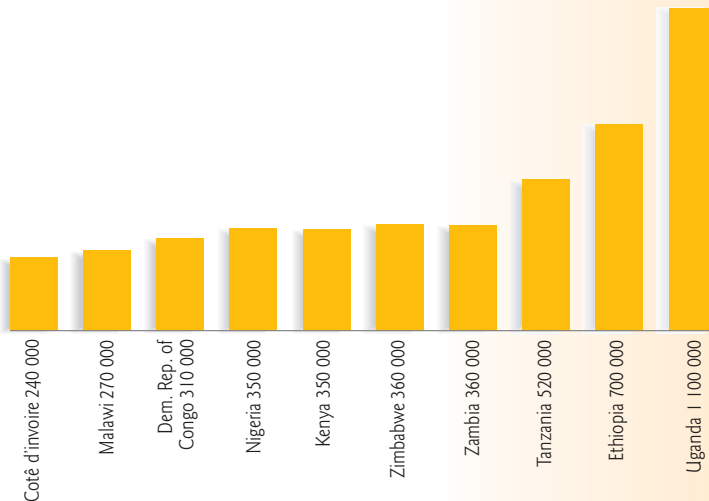
In spring 2000, follow-up of the Jomtien conference was held in Dakar, Senegal. This conference found that development had been slow.

We still face the same difficulties as at the beginning of the previous decade. In addition, new challenges have emerged, such as the problems caused by the HI-virus and AIDS as well as mass refugee movements.

The participants in the Dakar conference, 180 countries as well as representatives of numerous international organizations and NGOs, pledged their commitment to the goal set in Copenhagen, whereby equal and free basic education will be available to everyone by 2015.

Why, then, do some people still lack access to learning, despite the broad international consensus on the developmental impacts of education? Though first and foremost a question of political will, the issue of money is also involved. Providing everyone with a basic education would require an additional investment of USD 7–8 billion per year – the same amount that the world spends on arms in a week. Besides, much of the deficit in the education sector could be offset by intensifying operations in the sector, so the need for funds is actually less than that indicated by the above figure.

AIDS ORPHANS



Numbers of children currently under 15 who lost their mother or both parents to AIDS (10 most affected countries.)

(Source: UNAIDS/WHO 1999)

The achievement of Education for All programme requires long-term commitments from its financiers. While each individual country is responsible for implementation of the programme, donors and other funding institutions play an important role as financiers. Finland is an active proponent of the targets and implementation of the Education for All programmes.

THE SIX GOALS OF THE DAKAR FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood education
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to free primary education
- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
- 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
- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015
- Improving all aspects of the quality of education, schooling and learning at all levels

IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES FROM THE EDUCATION VIEWPOINT:

- The first World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien 1990
- World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 1995
- UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995
- World Education Forum, Dakar 2000
- UN Millennium Summit, New York 2000



Education and Finnish development cooperation

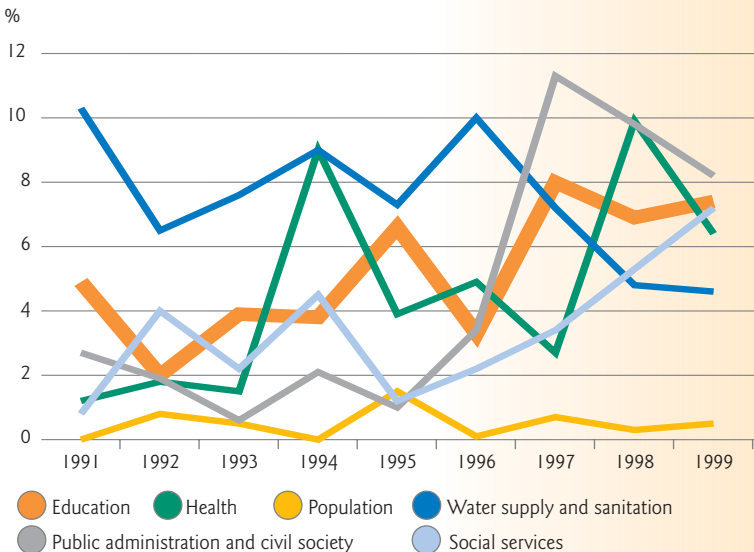
The principal objectives of the development cooperation financed by Finland are:

- Reducing poverty
- Combating environmental hazards
- Promoting equality, democracy and human rights in the developing countries

According to the Finnish Government's Decision-in-Principle on development cooperation (1996), basic education is one of the principal means of reducing poverty. International research has shown that investment in basic education yields great societal dividends. These investments also advance equality and enhance the inclusion of vulnerable groups, in particular.

Finland's development cooperation appropriations for education declined in the early 1990s, when all development cooperation funding was drastically reduced. During the 1990s, financing has increased again, and appropriations for the education sector have more than doubled since 1996. The edu-

BILATERAL COOPERATIVE COMMITMENTS TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN 1991 - 1999





cation sector accounted for some seven per cent of Finnish development cooperation funds in 1999.

Finnish development cooperation in the education sector focuses on Africa. However, recent years have seen new projects launched in Latin America, Asia and the Balkans. The main objectives of this cooperation depend on the needs of each partner. For example, in terms of such Finnish cooperation partners as Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nepal and Nicaragua, the principal goal of education-sector development cooperation is to reduce poverty. In the Palestinian area, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Kosovo, cooperation aims to support the peace process and to prevent the rise and spread of new conflicts. In addition, an effort is made to promote equality in education and to further its availability, quality and efficiency in all countries party to bilateral cooperation. By financing the activities and reforms of the education sector in developing countries, Finland aims to improve the supply and availability of educational services, to enhance the quality and significance of education, to intensify efficiency and to improve the use of resources in the systems.

NGOs central to the education sector

A portion of development cooperation funds is channelled through non-governmental organizations. Implemented by NGOs, grassroots activities complement international cooperation. The social sector has traditionally been a strong area of NGO expertise. In 1998, the education sector accounted for about 27 per cent, or FIM 65 million, of the project support received by NGOs.

The wide range of actors included among NGOs is reflected in the substance of the projects carried out by them. The largest group of NGOs implementing educational projects consists of religious organizations, most notably the old missionary organizations, some of which have operated in their target countries for over a century. In addition, many cultural and disabled people's organizations have projects in the education sector. The NGO projects receiving support concentrate mainly on the following fields: learning materials; vocational training; special education; and non-formal basic education.

Sector programmes and the education sector

In recent years, development aid has been directed not only to isolated projects but also to supporting entire sectors. Sector-wide programmes in the education sector, in particular, have been started in many partner countries.

Assessment of project-specific support has established that it is difficult to achieve sustainable results through narrow-scale activities. While projects themselves have been effective, they have operated outside the partner country's development plans and budgets. Another problem with project-specific assistance is fragmentation owing to the high number of actors, all of whom follow their own principles and procedures.

Sector programmes strive for activities that are more effective and have more sustainable impacts. Sector programmes are comprehensive development plans drawn up in the target country; responsibility rests mainly with the country's authorities and other stakeholders. Implementation utilizes the partner country's existing administrative structures, which are supported and consolidated during the process. Sector programmes shift the focus from aid inputs to analysing the outcome of this





assistance. The programme impacts are monitored through jointly defined and agreed criteria.

The criteria are specifically outlined for each country. However, there are some general and universal benchmarks, such as trends in enrolment, levels of achievement, changes in the level of teacher training, the literacy rate, gender disparities and their trends as well as developments in education budget appropriations and their relation to other budgetary items.

Sector programmes have cemented cooperation between aid organizations, which participate in planning sector programmes and support the implementation in a coordinated manner. For small countries like Finland, sector programmes have given access to educational policy dis-

ussion at national level, a fact that is hard to accomplish through isolated projects. At present, Finland is engaged in the preparation or implementation of six education-sector programmes; those in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Nepal and the Palestinian area.

All these countries mentioned as examples have a long way to go before their programmes in the sector are fully operational, but much headway has already been made. In Nepal and Ethiopia, separate preparatory and monitoring missions have given way to joint activities, thus alleviating administrative pressures on the cooperative partner. In Ethiopia and the Palestinian area, an effort has been made to harmonize the financiers' policies. At best, several different reporting approaches have been replaced by a single model, which is the one applied by the country's government. In all countries, the need for external expertise has been coordinated.

Focal points of Finnish development cooperation in the education sector

Finnish development cooperation in the education sector is guided by the principles of the Education for All process, the emphasis being on general basic education. Planning and preparation of cooperation always takes account of the entire education sector and its needs in the partner country, as well as each country's own development programmes.

Teacher education

Because teachers are in a key position when the quality of education is improved, it is highly important to guarantee adequate teacher education, which consists of basic training and continuous in-service and professional development.

In many countries, especially in Africa, teacher training has traditionally revolved around mastering the subject, while the pedagogic aspects of the work have received less attention. The cooperative programmes supported by Finland develop the structures and substance of teacher training systems as well as pedagogic skills. In Tanzania and Kosovo, Finland contributes to the development of teacher training structures and operational strategies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, teacher trainers' education is supported. In South Africa, the old teacher seminar system is being dismantled, while support is given to the country's university-level teacher training.

A common problem in the developing countries is that many teachers have inadequate professional competence. Finland supports teachers' professional qualification programmes in Tanzania, Mozambique and Nicaragua.





Inclusion and special education

In many poor countries, people with disability constitute one of the most excluded segments of society. The Finnish Decision-in-Principle concerning development cooperation (1996) and Finland's Policy on Relations with Developing Countries (1998) stress the need to involve people with disability in all the development cooperation projects and programmes funded by Finland. In the education sector, this is mostly done through special needs education projects. In the field of inclusive special education, Finland strives to remove the obstacles to learning encountered by special groups. Inclusion is based on

the idea that all pupils in need of special education be taught together with other children. Accepting the fact that people are different is beneficial to the entire school system. Instead of segregated special schools, support is given to educating those with disability through the general school system.

The inclusive approach has been adopted especially in Zambia and South Africa, where inclusion is a political objective. In many countries and cultures, prejudice and traditional beliefs are associated with disability, and affect people with disability. In Kosovo as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, which constitute new cooperative countries, an effort is made to abandon the old medically-oriented approach to people with disability, in order to prevent their exclusion from ordinary schoolwork.

Bilingual education

In many regions, the future of indigenous cultures is threatened, e.g. by linguistic exclusion. Finland supports an indigenous language project in

the Costa Atlántica region of Nicaragua, where multicultural education aims at bilingualism. Many studies have highlighted the importance of the mother tongue as the first language of education.

Studying in one's native language improves school performance. This is why it is important to study the local and majority languages side by side. Bilingual education enhances indigenous people's empowerment and status. The project strives to develop teacher education, learning materials and operational strategies.



Development of assessment and the related schemes

Assessment yields information about pupils' level of learning. It is often said that good education is indicated by what pupils learn, and how. Assessment is also an important tool in defining the efficiency of the entire education system. Assessment results provide pertinent information applicable, among other things, for developing teacher skills and curricula.

Finland contributes to the development of assessment schemes in the Palestinian area, Nepal and Mozambique. In these countries, assessment of learning and assessment of the education system are developed in the direction of more continuous and informed assessment. These countries, and many others, have previously used assessment for sorting purposes.

In addition, Finland supports an education system assessment programme being carried out in the South-Eastern European region (SEE) under OECD supervision. Coordinated by the OECD, the Program of International Student Achievement (PISA) is implemented in the SEE countries in order to devise student achievement assessment schemes conforming to European standards.



Renovation and construction of schools

The poor condition of school buildings is a disadvantage for pupils and teachers alike. Moreover, there is a shortage of classrooms in the developing countries, for which reason pupils have to go to school in two or even three shifts. This shortens the school-day, a fact that has an adverse effect on learning.

With Finnish support, schools are being renovated and built in Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia. Not an end in itself, renovation or construction is a means of improving the school system. Appropriate physical surroundings improve the chance to learn and

enhance the quality of education. Better school-buildings and reasonable housing for staff will also help attract qualified teachers to rural areas and out-of-the-way villages. Long journeys to and from school are a major obstacle to girls' attendance, in particular. Construction of wells and sanitary facilities on school premises is necessary, too.

It is important that village residents and community members take part in building schoolhouses. This is likely to reinforce ownership and commitment: local people will then consider schools important and will appreciate education more. In the Zambian education programme, which is supported by Finland, the communities build the schoolhouses themselves; elsewhere, commercial contractors are also hired.

Vocational training

When vocational training is developed, it is essential to take account of people's job opportunities as well as the needs of local industry. Finland supports the Chimoio Agricultural Institute in Mozambique, the aim being to improve education so that it is effective and meets the require-

ments of working life. Expanding vocational training to new sectors is also in the planning stages as part of the country's broader development programme. Another major challenge is to adapt expensive vocational training to the rapidly changing needs of working life. Contacts with the private sector are essential.

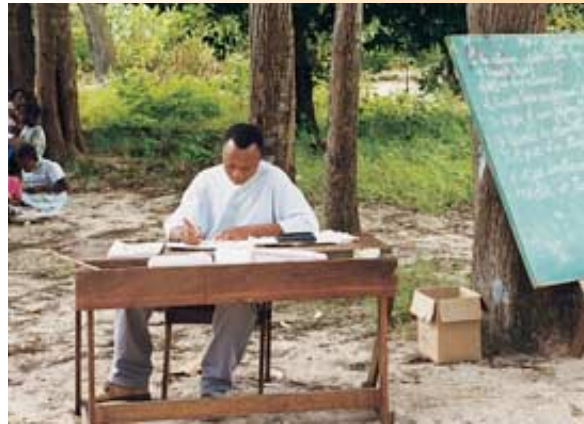
Development of educational administration

In many of Finland's cooperative countries, broad-scale reforms of the local administration are underway, the aim being to decentralize power from the central government to the local authorities. Finland supports reforms of educational administration in Mozambique, Tanzania and the Palestinian area. These projects seek operational avenues for updating governance and decentralizing decision-making. The main objective of developing educational administration is to intensify activities.

Information technology in education

Information and communication technology has become an inseparable part of modern society, but the use of new technology is not distributed evenly between the industrialized and developing countries. According to estimates, every person logging on to the Internet in a developing country has 150 counterparts in the industrialized world. In a given country, there may also be disparities between regions, schools and population groups. The latest technology may be used in private and elite schools, whereas the majority of schools have no access to corresponding equipment and software.

The provision of information and communication technology and the related know-how for use in education is one facet of educational cooperation with South Africa and the Palestinian Authority. The aim of this collaboration is to bridge the technology gap between urban and rural





areas, as well as globally between the South and the North. In South Africa, an effort is made to increase the educational use of information and communication technology, while in the Palestinian area, the aim is to expand the utilization of new technology in producing study material and in administration.

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

Finland supports the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), which is a partnership organization of African Ministers and financing organizations. It is a collaborative body of African Ministers of Education and donors; the working groups striving to develop the various segments of education operate under it. The first goal is to enhance the position of the educa-

tion sector and to draw attention to its problems. Secondly, ADEA aims at reinforcing cooperation between all the relevant actors. The third important objective is to increase analytical information contributing to problem-solving in the education sector. Finland supports ADEA financially, and some ADEA working groups have Finnish experts.

Additional information:

<http://www.adeanet.org>

and

<http://www.unesco.org/education/efa>



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