



Workshop 18

EFA-ESD Dialogue: Creating Synergies and Linkages for Educating for a Sustainable World

Time: 2 April 2009, 09.00 – 13.00h

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The objective of the workshop is to highlight the potential synergies and linkages between Education for All (EFA) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which are imperative for the effective promotion and achievement of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Education seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. It is itself a basic human right but is also a vehicle for fulfilling other human rights and freedoms which must be protected, promoted and respected. Moreover, ESD has close affinities with the human rights agenda by making connections at local, national and global levels on such issues as peace, democracy, the right to development and citizenship. Raising public awareness of these issues and linking the efforts of both initiatives and their agendas, perspectives and goals, notably with respect to programme implementation at the country level, will contribute to reducing poverty and the impact of climate change, broadening access to primary education for all and enhancing health-care provision.

According to UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development Policy Dialogue publication, *EFA-ESD Dialogue: Educating for a sustainable world (2008)*, the EFA and ESD constituencies both aim "to create an inspirational movement, with which a wide range of people can identify, for learning and developing with others." Separate strategies on how best to achieve this goal were developed by each constituency, with some nuances about how each defines itself and carries out its agenda. EFA is largely concerned with advocating for access to quality basic education and literacy for all learners, particularly those who are most excluded, and remains an essential

element in addressing broader social challenges such as HIV and AIDS, conflicts and crises, poverty and for promoting democratic values and intercultural dialogue. ESD also places emphasis on the basic values, processes and behaviours necessary to strengthen educational capacities, address poverty reduction and build sustainable livelihoods, but reaches out not only to those most in need of education but also to those in more privileged positions in society who are often seen to have a disproportionate impact on global sustainability. This broader outreach is conducive towards generating a more widespread understanding of the importance of both universal education and engaging in sustainable practices for a common global future and towards concrete lifestyle changes and more active engagement that will have lasting benefits for all individuals and communities.

The EFA goals of lifelong learning and adult literacy can benefit from the methodology and work of Paulo Friere, a well-known educator and author who also served as an advisor to UNESCO in the late 1960s and early 70s. In his work, Friere recognized the overlaps and linkages that exist between the EFA and ESD agendas, decades in advance of the formal adoption of their frameworks in 2000 and 2005, respectively. In particular, he noted their common commitment to quality education and endorsement of education as a human right. Similar to his work and to that of "cultural animators" who worked with illiterate peasants and oppressed persons, the EFA and ESD agendas strive to promote human rights - predominately with respect to gender equality and the rights of marginalized populations - with the overarching aim of im- →

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proving health, reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of life. In other words, liberating individuals by proposing a “humanistic and liberatory conception of education¹.”

Both the EFA and ESD agendas call on the participation of all stakeholders and constituencies, including governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, communities and individuals. It is also important to note that certain challenges and tensions exist between EFA and ESD, such as EFA’s strong focus on basic education, ESD’s broader purpose beyond education, and various social and geographical differences, which limit collaboration and integration. Moreover, although the EFA goals are closely related to the MDGs, ESD’s role in the achievement of the MDGs lies largely in its ability to develop educational initiatives that bring together economic, social and environmental concerns in order to effectively address such challenges as poverty and climate change. Because ESD seeks to go “beyond education and also address the social and institutional components that inhibit sustainable development,” its role is essential in the integration of both agendas.

This workshop will address the mutual ESD and EFA aim of providing quality education for all via shared understanding, joint learning and multi-disciplinary approaches to meet the developmental and environmental concerns embedded in the MDGs. Creating a strong collaboration and synergy between the two constituencies will also support and strengthen efforts to promote the types of education and learning that are needed to ensure sustainability. This workshop will also address the challenges that have thus far limited the integration of the EFA and ESD agendas, such as their differing priorities, and will draw attention to the strategies ESD has put in place to address these tensions and move towards a clearer, more fully conceptualized and integrated form of sustainable development (SD) whose foundation is quality education for all.

The benefits of strategically integrating ESD viewpoints into the EFA agenda will also be examined

during this workshop. ESD’s focus on promoting such values as peace, gender equality, and respect for human rights, the environment and cultural diversity, along with its determination to challenge established models of education, will encourage the achievement of the EFA goals in a sustainable manner. Concurrently, EFA’s comparative advantage of in-depth knowledge about specific issues such as strengthening cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education, HIV and AIDS and gender empowerment can help inform and further ESD’s agenda. Moreover, EFA has an array of established connections with bilateral and multilateral partners as well as mechanisms for resource mobilization and increasing public awareness that ESD could tap into.

Policy recommendations on how best to integrate the EFA and ESD agendas will be discussed during the workshop, including the following:

- **Create effective synergy between ESD and EFA.** Mechanisms that promote leadership development in both constituencies can be established, with strategies that aim to unify the ESD and EFA agendas and move towards a concept of Education for Sustainable Development for All (ESDFA). It will be important for both constituencies to maintain ownership over specific issues for which they have a comparative advantage, while focusing on collaborative contributions toward achieving the MDGs and the EFA goals.
- **Alliances must be built with bilateral, emerging/new and multilateral donors.** Multi-dimensional approaches and new partnerships must be actively promoted at the international, regional and national levels in order to develop more comprehensive responses and holistic approaches to meet all of the internationally-agreed development goals.
- **ESD and EFA can move toward joint monitoring and assessment.** Establishing practices focused on joint monitoring will allow for more thorough analyses of the approaches and programmes that are most efficiently addressing both ESD and EFA priorities. Regional events and workshops focused on joint reporting practices will help move more quickly toward a shared concept of providing quality education for all.

¹ Education for Social Transformations. n.a. Approach: action-research related to education and training. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Retrieved March 10, 2009.