

ISSUE OBJECTIVES FOR THE 2002 G8 KANANASKIS SUMMIT

- Universal Primary Education -

Introduction

At the Genoa Summit, 2001, the G8 outlined 3 primary commitments which were seen as pivotal to fostering and advancing universal primary education (UPE). What follows is a discussion of the G8's ability to fulfill these commitments at the upcoming Kananaskis Summit.

1. Help Countries Meet the Dakar Framework for Action Goal of UPE by 2015

In mid-June, 2002, the World Bank (WB) announced its plans for an Education For All (EFA) Fast Track and, thereby, set the stage for G8 members to follow through with their commitment to help establish universal primary education by 2015¹. This WB Initiative was welcomed by the G7 Finance Minister's Meeting in Halifax from June 14-15. In Monterrey, while attending the UN Financing for Development meeting in March of 2002, several members of the G8 made commitments to deliver more ODA to developing nations, thereby aspiring to reach the millennium goal of budgeting 0.7% of GDP to aid². Most notable in this commitment are Canada, the US and the EU.

Although these commitments and advancements project positively on the G8's commitment to UPE, there is still much skepticism as to the members' political will to follow through with these commitments and, furthermore, to allocate sufficient funds to education in developing countries. Member countries such as Germany and Britain are being scrutinized by civil society groups and developing nations, themselves, for not following up their principles with practice. At the meeting in Halifax, a joint G7 Finance Ministers' Press Release emphasized that recipient countries must have "sound economic policies, strong institutions and good governance" before they can begin to benefit from development assistance. No further explanations or consolidated commitments were made towards specific funding programs for advancing UPE. The WB estimates that \$5 billion USD will be needed each year to meet the goals of universal primary education; in 1999-2000, the G7 was far from this mark with aid for basic education averaging \$562 million USD per year³. As a result, the G8 has a tall order to fill at the Kananaskis Summit at the end of June 2002.

¹ *World Bank Aid Deal Before G7 Meeting*. Associated Press. June 14, 2002.

² *2001 Genoa Compliance Report*. G8 Research Group, June, 2002.

<http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/evaluations/2002compliance/2002reportCompEducation.pdf>

³ www.campaignforeducation.org/_html/docs/welcome/frameset.shtml

2. Foster Assessment Systems to Measure Progress, Identify Best Practices and Ensure Accountability for Results in Meeting UPE

The WB has gone far to ensure that the process of admitting developing countries to the Fast Track agenda will be a transparent and accountable one. The Fast Track for Education requires that national plans, also known as Poverty-Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), provide the basis for acceptance to the program, therefore ensuring that strategies for development are locally owned. Generally, an acceptable PRSP details a government-identified dedication to the following: a commitment to the abolition of household payments and a simultaneous increase in private spending on education; civil society involvement and monitoring; a focus on long-term EFA goals; reforms to improve learning outcome, including increases in teachers' salaries, unionization, etc.; and a commitment to reduce the impact of AIDS/ HIV on teachers. These measures are implemented with the goal of developing an accountable and transparent Fast Tracking system.

Further methods of injecting transparency into the process of advancing EFA includes UNESCO's 'Global Campaign for Education' attempts to increase coordination and cooperation among donor countries through the establishment of a consortium, which will manage pledges to UPE on a bi-annual basis, to countries with approved PRSPs. These pledges are to be reviewed by the High Level Group on Education, which is also the body in charge of scrutinizing donor efforts.⁴ Members of the G8 have a presence in this process as participants to, or observers of, the High Level Group on Education.

In reference to EFA, the G7 Finance Ministers' Press Release went as far as to "strongly endorse the expeditious implementation of a plan focused on program quality and measurable results." Therefore, the members of the G7 will go to Kananaskis with the opportunity to follow through with these bold initiatives and unwavering assurances.

3. Focus on Teacher Training by Building on the Work of the G8 Digital Opportunities Task Force (dot.force) and Expanding the Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to Train Teachers

Technology has served as both medium and message in the realm EFA advancement. Through the G8 Task Force for Education, member countries opened an on-line dialogue for the public and civil society to ask questions and raise concerns about the G8's performance in on their UPE mandate.⁵ Nevertheless, the G8 Task Force forum did little more than reiterate the current technological stumbling blocks that persist and inhibit the advancement of EFA. Little elaboration has been provided in explaining why recipient countries continue to "lack the necessary infrastructure to participate fully in the information age", nor are there any details given as to how the G8 Dot Force might address the "lack of teachers trained to use ICTs in the classroom".

⁴ *Briefing Amsterdam EFA Meeting, April 2002.* http://www.campaignforeducation.org/_html/2002-docs/04-amst-conf/content.shtml

⁵ *Education Task Force E-Consultation. Government of Canada.* March 2002. <http://www.g8education.gc.ca/framework>

These obstacles to fostering UPE are compounded by larger, more crippling factors such as the effect of AIDS on teachers and children, and by child labour, which continues to rise. While technology among the G8 countries has become increasingly more accessible and affordable, funding for education represents less than 10 percent of most bilateral aid budgets.⁶

Therefore, given its performance on the issue of UPE, the G8 is in a position where it must provide very specific deliverables if it is to meet its commitment to reach the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action.

These deliverables, as recommended by UNESCO for the G7 Finance Ministerial, are as follows:

- Endorse the Education For All Action Plan and commit at least \$4 bn USD per year for its implementation...
- Announce immediate action to fast track a group of 15-20 countries and immediately provide the additional resources these developing countries require to deliver primary education for all their children
- Launch a financing framework to extend action to tackle the education crisis in countries beyond those included in the fast track process... ⁷

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⁶ *Education Task Force E-Consultation*. Government of Canada. March 2002.
<http://www.g8education.gc.ca/framework>

⁷ *Every Child In School: Will G7 Finance Ministers Deliver?*. UNESCO Global Campaign for Education.
www.campaignforeducation.org/_html/docs/welcome/frameset.shtml