



Teacher Challenges for Education for All in India

International Policy Dialogue Forum on Teachers for Education for All

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New Delhi

India

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International Policy Dialogue Forum

1. Teachers for Education for All- Background and Rationale

At the World Education Forum in 2000, the international community defined the global Education for All (EFA) agenda as relating to six areas: early childhood care and education, primary education, youth and adult learning needs, literacy, gender equality and quality in education. Three quantifiable goals were set for 2015: halving the number of illiterates, universal primary education and gender equality, the latter two being reiterated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Teachers are a precondition to the achievement of all the EFA goals and the key to bridging both the qualitative and quantitative targets.

At the Oslo meeting in December 2008, the Education for All High Level Group (HLG) made recommendations to all EFA partners and national governments to identify their short and medium- term needs for recruitment, deployment, training and retention of teachers. The recommendations also called upon development partners to support national efforts in this area, to identify and meet the needs specified, and to provide predictable support to cover the associated costs.

Following the recommendations of High Level Group meeting to address the teacher challenge the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA was established in early 2009. Within the purview of its mandate outlined in the Action Plan, the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA supports an accelerated effort to bridge the teacher gap by addressing three principal areas - policy, funding and capacity-building, through a range of activities and mechanisms. To this end, the Secretariat for the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA has organized a series of conferences, workshops and policy dialogue forums focusing on a wide range of teacher-related issues. A good case in point are the International Conference on Teachers for EFA that was held in Africa in January 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya, the policy dialogue forum in Bali, Indonesia in September 2011, and the workshop that was conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam in November 2011. The themes that have been identified for discussions at the international policy dialogue forum in India are not only priority themes in the context of teacher education and training in India but also reflect the discussions that took place in the three aforementioned international events.

Following the success of this international conference, the Secretariat in conjunction with the Government of India will organize a two-day long conference which will focus on a range of

issues related to teacher challenges in India. These issues have been identified through deliberations with the Government of India and the Secretariat of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA.

In its record of numerous activities, the Secretariat, will, for the first time co-organise a conference concentrating on the teacher challenges of one country alone. The timing of the conference is propitious as India will assume the chair of the E-9 Secretariat and will host the Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on the agreed thematic of Inclusive Quality Education at the end of 2012.

2. Teachers for Education for All in India

2.1. Overview and context

India is one of the major emerging economies of Asia and the world. Ensuring sustainability of the expanding economic success of the county puts much emphasis on the need for well balanced development. With the recognition that education is the cornerstone for all development, this vast country which is divided into 28 states and 7 union territories, with over 600 districts and 0.6 million villages, has taken major strides in making education available to its diverse population.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the Government of India's flagship programme for the achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. The 86th amendment to the Constitution of India declared making education to the children between the age group of 6-14 years a fundamental right. The SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. The programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. In addition, the SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs and seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

The SSA recognizes the importance of teachers as a key element in achieving UPE. To this end, the SSA aims to provide additional teachers to existing schools with inadequate teacher strength and reinforce the capacity of existing teachers by extensive training, grants for developing teaching-learning materials and strengthening the academic support structure at cluster, block and district levels. Despite the considerable progress achieved with regard to the SSA, challenges

still remain. The shortage of teachers has been identified as a crucial factor in the success of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. With the growing emphasis on quality education and the Universalisation of Secondary Education (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan-RMSA) foreseen as a priority after 2015, the need to address a wide range of teacher-related issues is a pressing priority. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) and the Right to Education act (RTE) that came into force in April 2010, has furthermore emphasized the need to address both the qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of the teacher deficit.

In keeping with this background, the *Teacher Challenges for Education for All in India* conference will focus on five areas identified during discussions between the Task Force Secretariat and the Government of India.

The conference will bring together members of the Central and State governments as well as a wide range of stakeholders from non-governmental and civil society organisations at the national level as well as international organizations to deliberate over the five following areas:

- Continuing professional development for teachers in India;
- Decentralization: challenges and steps forward;
- Feminization of the teacher force;
- Public-private partnerships to address the teacher gap;
- Monitoring & Evaluation of teacher policy reforms.

2.2. Objectives

The objective of the conference is to deliberate over the five aforementioned areas and the issues that fall under their premise with a view to generate recommendations that could inform future policy decisions at the central and state level.

The conference also allows for an opportunity for sharing of policy-related experiences with other member countries of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA thus promoting North-South and South-South cooperation.

Format: panel discussions with three/four invited speakers and time for Q&A followed by working groups, plenary session and a session dedicated to recommendations and wrap-up.

Sessions proposed:

2.2.1. Continuing professional development for teachers

In the contemporary socio-economic context of India, learners, on the one hand, have a wide range of demands and expectations from teachers. On the other, the teacher's professional success and capacity to serve the system and its policy goals also depend on his/her awareness of challenges that India and its society are facing in terms of gender disparity, cultural diversity, inequity and inequality. The two aspects together reinforce the need for a state-of-the-art continuing professional development for teachers in India. In addition, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education that was published in 2009/2010 has emphasized the importance of in-service programmes that could sustain continuing professional development. The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues, which come under this section, are as follows:

- Redesigning and upgrading current teacher education programmes: what challenges and opportunities?
- Harmonisation and revitalisation of teacher education infrastructural provision across the country: what necessary measures?
- Use of open and distance learning (ODL) for continuous professional development: the solution for the future?

2.2.2 Decentralization: challenges and steps forward

The Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) emphasized the significance and need for a decentralized system for the professional preparation of teachers. This policy was put in place proactively by the Central Government in the 8th Plan with the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education. Of the 599 districts in the country, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) were set up in 571 districts, of which only 529 are functional to date. The DIETs are envisioned as 'Academic Lead Institutions' to provide guidance to all academic functionaries in the district. According to a recent study¹, much is left to desire.

There is an increasing need to link school knowledge with community knowledge. This increases the relevance of education and the quality of learning. This also promotes the inclusion of locally relevant content in the curriculum and pedagogy.

¹. Aziz Premji Foundation, (2010), Status of District Institutes of Education and Training: *A Brief Report on the State of DIETs in India*, Bangalore, India.

The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- Revitalising existing structures (District Institutes for Education and Training) and establishing: what challenges and opportunities?
- Building capacities of teachers for contextualization and the development of appropriate teaching/learning methodologies.
- Developing strategies for mobilizing community participation: what challenges and opportunities?

2.2.3 Feminization of the teaching force

Women and the teaching profession is an area that is particularly pertinent to the education MDGs and EFA goals. Developing countries are currently working towards overcoming the dual challenges of education expansion and universal provision while ensuring quality and equity. In the context of countries that have achieved the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender parity in education, historical analysis indicates that an influx of women into the teaching profession has been central to these successes. In countries where girl child education remains a challenge, a dearth in female teachers within the system has been identified as one of the core barriers to gender parity and equality in education²

The role of women in the teaching profession in India as in other developing countries is not without challenges. Under the SSA, several initiatives were put in place to address the gender issue; however, more needs to be done to attract women to this profession.

The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- Challenges of developing gender sensitive curriculum
- Best practices of women participation in the teaching profession: an opportunity to scale up
- Incentives to promote female participation in the teaching profession

2.2.4 Public-private partnerships: innovative approaches to address the teacher gap

The rapid entry of non-state organisations, some of which are set up by professionals and others drawing on corporate profits in the business world could be regarded as a sign of greater engagement between the state and non-state sector. In recent years there have been radical initiatives of multi-partner engagements in education to bring about improvements in the

² Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO (2011), *Women and the Teaching Profession: Exploring the Feminisation Debate*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

quality of schooling by drawing on the different core competencies of various providers to work towards programmes that emphasise for example the importance of innovative textbooks and teaching tools to create and support an environment of in service training. The areas/questions for discussion, each covering a large range of issues that come under this section are as follows:

- Innovative approaches of NGOs to address the teacher gaps: learning from experiences
- Role of corporate foundations in addressing the teacher challenge: what challenges and opportunities?
- Exploring new partnerships for advocacy for the teacher cause: possibilities of media engagement

2.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of Teacher Policy Reforms

A glaring weakness of existing teacher education practices is the restricted scope of evaluation of student teachers and its excessively quantitative nature. The qualitative angle that takes into account other professional capacities and competences like attitudes and values are missing from evaluation exercises. Furthermore, there is a lack of sustained evaluation interventions thus making informed policy decisions difficult. The main areas/questions for discussions that fall under this session are as follows:

- Designing instruments for assessment and evaluation: capturing progress
- Developing a scheme for comprehensive and continuous monitoring and evaluation: sustaining momentum
- Innovations in monitoring and evaluation: strategies to reach the unreached

3. Draft list of participants

- Representatives from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India
- Representatives of State governments
- Representatives from national NGOs
- Representatives of the national civil society organisations
- Representatives of members countries of the International Task Force for Teachers for EFA
- Members of the Steering Committee of the International Task Force for Teachers for EFA
- Secretariat of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA
- UNESCO (HQ, Delhi Country office)

