



Helping children since 1937

## **Capacity Statement Primary Education<sup>1</sup>**

### **Global Overview and Plan's Reach**

The world's faith in the power of education to transform individuals, and communities has resulted in the rapid expansion of education systems. With globalization and the world's increasing focus on a knowledge based economy, education has become more important than ever. It has also led to the global recognition of the rights of individuals to an education that respects their capabilities and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Rooted in the human rights and development aspirations are the progressive vision and goals of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, translating this vision into programs remains a challenge. Although the conceptual framework of Education for All is broad in terms envisioning education beyond imparting information, its implementation is greatly reduced to access. Children and adults gaining competencies and self-confidence and improving their capabilities mostly remain an ideal and the right to education remains rhetorical. The education related MDG and indicators are narrower than EFA goals and they are silent about quality of education. In spite of the promises and significant progress especially in quantitative aspects of education, the global goals continue to be elusive.

Since the World Education Forum in 2000, where the EFA was agreed to, remarkable progress has been made. The EFA Global Monitoring Report from 2008 highlighted progress towards universal primary education and gender parity. Between 1999 and 2005, primary school enrollment increased from 647 million to 688 million worldwide, rising by 36% in sub-Saharan Africa and 22% in South and West Asia.<sup>2</sup> However despite increases to access, quality still remains an issue. In sub-Saharan Africa, the retention rate through the last grade of primary education, although improving, remains around the median of 63%. According to the EFA monitoring report, 8 million new primary school teachers are needed each year to provide quality education to all primary students by 2015.<sup>3</sup> These challenges have jeopardized the EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and estimates predict that fifty-eight out of eighty-six countries that have not yet reached universal primary enrollment will not achieve it by 2015.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Eric Tyler and Dr. Pamela Young in December 2009

<sup>2</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

<sup>3</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

<sup>4</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

Despite progress, there are still 75 million primary school aged children out of school<sup>5</sup>. In developing countries, this amounts to more than one in five children who do not attend primary school.<sup>6</sup> Only thirty-five developing countries account for 37% of all out of school children.<sup>7</sup> For every 100 out-of-school boys, there are 122 girls<sup>8</sup>, and a little more than one-third of countries are achieving equal gender enrollment rates.<sup>9</sup>

An important reason for the gap between EFA vision and reality in education is slow progress in terms reducing extreme poverty, improving gender equity and citizen's participation in governance. Failure of governments to tackle extreme inequalities undermines progress. Yet some of the poorest countries have demonstrated that political leadership and pragmatic policies make a difference. Good governance is important to improve accountability and participation and to tackle inequalities.

Efforts are needed to ensure enrolment and retention from primary school and beyond. It is clear that attention needs to be paid to the quality of education and learning achievement. Providing equal access to a quality education and seeing children through to completion are central goals of Plan. Additionally, it is the organizational goals to ensure the right of all children and young people to quality education and to empower children with knowledge, skills and positive values relevant for their wellbeing and development. Plan has outlined three key priorities in its education improvement framework: Access, Quality and Education Governance and Management. During the fiscal year ending in June 2008, Plan allocated more than \$33 million to support and organize primary education programs worldwide, and over the past five years, Plan has invested nearly \$180 million in primary education.<sup>10</sup> Plan supports work on education in more than 40 countries throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Types of programs have ranged from teacher training to capacity building, providing scholarships, training for parent teachers associations, constitution and rehabilitation, provision of materials and supplies and awareness raising.

### **Educational Attainment – Access, Completion and Retention**

Despite the time-bound global commitment to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015, some 75 million children of primary school age, over half of them girls, are out-of-school. Four out of five children who are out-of-school live in rural areas in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Plan has invested heavily in securing free and equal access to primary education and ensuring that children stay in school thus completing their education. Evaluations carried out of Plan education programs from 2006 to 2008 confirmed that investments in school infrastructure, equipment, and teaching/learning

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<sup>5</sup> This figure is based on 2008 figures from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics  
[http://portal.unesco.org/geography/fr/ev.php-URL\\_ID=8824&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/fr/ev.php-URL_ID=8824&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>6</sup> Plan USA Technical Brief, 2008

<sup>7</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

<sup>8</sup> FAWA Annual Report 2007

<sup>9</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

<sup>10</sup> Plan Global Evaluation of UPE, 2007

materials have contributed to increase enrolment and reduce drop out of boys and girls.<sup>11</sup> Between 2002 and 2007, Plan allocated nearly \$100 million to construction and rehabilitation projects in countries that lack educational facilities.

Plan has received funding from the US government for education projects in West Africa directly targeted access to education, particularly for girls. These programs include the BRIGHT (Burkinabe Response to Improve Girl's Chances to Succeed Program) Phase I and Phase II work in Burkina Faso, the IMAGINE (Improve the Education of Girls in Niger) project in Niger and the Improving Access to Education in work Guinea-Bissau. These programs have included building new classrooms and schools, gender sensitive toilets with separate facilities for boys and girls, construction of teachers houses, and water points close to the school. The water points help to ensure access to safe drinking water and also to ensure good hygiene practices in the schools.

### **Case Study: Burkina Faso Improving Access and Quality of Education**

Primary school enrollment rates in Burkina Faso are some of the lowest in the world. In 2005, primary school gross enrollment stood at 56% with completion rates dropping to only 30%. Attendance rates for girls continue to be low with only one in four completing primary school. Some of the reasons girls don't go to school include early marriage and the need to work to support their families. From 2005 to 2008 Plan, with a grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, implemented the *Burkinabe Response to Improve Girl's Chances to Succeed* (BRIGHT) project. The BRIGHT program was carried out in 132 rural villages located within 10 provinces. These villages were chosen because they had the lowest rates of girls' enrollment.

Project activities included the construction of school buildings, separate latrines for boys and girls, daily school meals, text books, and incentives for girls' attendance. Staff and partners also carried out mobilization campaigns with the community, teachers and ministry officials on gender sensitivity, and mentoring programs in order to increase the enrollment of girls. Radio broadcasts and communications materials also helped to raise awareness about the importance of educating girls. Other critical project components included adult literacy training, particularly for female community leaders and other role models for young girls as well as capacity building for local Ministry of Education officials, heads of child care centers, and the community.

As a result, during the first year of the project, over 11,000 children enrolled in the newly constructed schools. This was well beyond the anticipated number of 3,300 students. In the second year, enrollment reached over 17,000 children. This was more than three times the number of expected pupils. In addition, girls had a school attendance rate of 95% in the newly constructed schools. The program also had a positive impact on academic achievement. Children who entered with test scores in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile improved, on average, to the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile by the end of the program. As a result of the program achievements, USAID is currently supporting a follow up phase to expand the schools to accommodate all six grades. In addition, early childhood care and development centers will be opened in all of the schools.

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<sup>11</sup> School Improvement Plan Evaluations (2006 and 2007), Primary Education Thematic Evaluation (2009)

In addition, Plan helps to ensure access to education for children from marginalized groups. Such programs have included assistance for disabled children, the inclusion of children affected by HIV/AIDS in the education system and improving access to education for children from indigenous groups. In Guinea Bissau, Plan has trained 150 teachers to address special education and provided support for second chance schools. These schools have provided an opportunity for 275 girls who had who had abandoned their studies to reenter the education system. Through this program, attention has also been drawn to the dangers of children being engaged in the worst forms of child labor.

### **Improvements to Education Quality**

The ultimate purpose of any education intervention, formal and non-formal, is ensuring that children and young people attain knowledge, skills and positive values that will help them throughout their lives. It is therefore critical that the learning environments and the process followed by education institutions are rooted in the principles of equality, inclusion, respect and accountability. Plan believes that students should feel a sense of security in education institutions and should be in a setting where they are confident to contribute in a meaningful way to decisions that will affect their physical, mental and emotional development. Plan has worked to progress the commitment to UNESCO's four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.<sup>12</sup> In order to reach these pillars of learning, Plan focuses on all of the essential elements related to quality including ensuring the environment in which children learn is one that is safe, the content is applicable and relevant to the local context and the processes which teachers use is in a manner that is friendly and supportive of all children.

In order to ensure that the learning environments and the processes are rooted in the principles of equality, inclusion, respect and accountability, Plan is committed to addressing issues of quality. The way in which quality improvements manifests itself in the work that Plan does varies by country. Throughout Latin American, Plan with development assistance from the government of the Netherlands, for ten years has trained teachers in interactive learning methodologies. Working in twelve countries throughout Latin American and the Caribbean Plan also continues to support programs that work to end violence in schools, train teachers, integrate health and nutrition into education programs and raise awareness on gender, tolerance and the importance of education. In Ecuador where Plan works in 793 schools, the team is working with teachers and supervisors to raise the quality of teaching and learning and also works at the national, municipal and community level on issues such as equal education rights particularly for indigenous children. In the Dominican Republic where quality remains a big issue; Plan has invested in building a community oriented education model with teachers and parents in an environment where multi-grade classrooms are the norm. It has created materials to help teachers determine how to instill positive discipline in the classroom. The program has also increased the participation of parents in schools, increased the aspirations of children, heightened the awareness of child rights and helped to decrease child labor as well as teenage pregnancy.

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<sup>12</sup> Delors, Jacques *et al.* 1996. *Learning: The Treasure Within*. Paris: UNESCO

Plan maintains a wide range of primary education initiatives to support healthy and friendly learning environments and also child and community participation such as the Child Friendly Schools campaign, School Improvement Programs (SIP) in twenty six countries, and the Learn without Fear campaign active in more than thirty countries. Common components of the SIP framework includes-improvements to the learning environment including the provision of equipment and textbooks, support to teacher professional development, parent and child participation and in Latin American a special focus on teaching methodologies.

### **Case Study: Uganda: School Improvement Program (SIP) (2003-2006)**

Following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by Uganda, in 1997, the government introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE). As a result of the large increase in school enrollment, schools faced a lack of teaching materials, shortage of trained teachers and poor infrastructure. In addition to these challenges, the education system has continued to be handicapped by weakness in the classroom approaches to teaching and learning, poor school management, gender gaps, low rates of attendance and completion, low performance in Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), limited participation of children and parents in school governance and lack of accountability by the teachers.

In 2003, Plan Uganda began the School Improvement Pilot Program (SIP) aimed at following a holistic approach focused on accountability and effectiveness. This program was carried out in ten pilot schools. Major components of the SIP focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, using financial, material and human resources more efficiently and promoting the rights of children. The main aim was to increase child achievement levels. The Plan team used dance and drama, and child-to-child methodologies and approaches to educate and promote children's rights and enabling their voices to be heard. Head teachers in all of the SIP schools reported active child participation in activities promoted by rights clubs as well as involvement in the co-curricular activities.

As a result of Plan's activities in the ten pilot schools, enrolment increased between 2001 and 2005 from 5,818 pupils to 7,115 pupils. The school drop-out rate also showed a drastic decline from 555 pupils in 2001 to 180 by 2005. An evaluation of the program which compared pupil, teachers and members of the school management committees in the non-SIP schools with their counter parts in the SIP schools found that those in the Plan supported school demonstrated greater awareness of child rights. It was also found that there was greater oversight of parents monitoring their children's performance with 91% of parents in SIP schools reported checking in class on their children's performance compared to 24% in non-SIP schools. There were also significant improvements in school infrastructure. All of the schools showed improvements with classroom space, furniture and learning materials and teachers reported receiving more support from the School Management Committees.

### **Education Governance and Management**

Plan recognizes that education is a fundamental and basic human right that is enshrined in numerous international treaties'. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) calls

on states to ensure that primary education is compulsory and free for all and further goes on to recognize the rights children have to access education which values the child's cultural identity, language and values and also free from violence. This convention is ratified by all but two countries, Somalia and the United States. In addition to the CRC, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women protects the rights of women to equality in education.

In helping children to fulfill their rights Plan continues to carry out awareness-raising initiatives for children, parents and community leaders highlighting the value of education. In raising awareness, Plan believes strongly in the value of promoting children participation and supports school based clubs and students governments. These children's clubs have had widespread success; for instance, in Ethiopia, Ghana, Burkina Faso, school-based health clubs have been organized and worked to inform large youth population on sanitation needs and HIV/AIDS risks. In Ecuador and Burkina Faso, radio broadcasts and newspaper articles were delivered by children on children rights, education and health. In Albania, prior to the closure of the country office in 2008, Plan carried out activities in 14 rural schools to establish and train student governments. Through exchange workshops with Swedish student government representatives, children were introduced to tactics they could use to increase their influence and have a greater role in their school and community. Teachers were also provided with training on how to bring child rights into the school curriculum. In addition, a training manual for young children on the relationship between children and the courts was also prepared. Children are participating in support of education and children's rights. Children are actively monitoring rights based issues in their communities including: early marriage (Bangladesh, Ethiopia), child labor (Ghana, Burkina Faso), child trafficking (Ghana), violence and schools and the community (Bangladesh, Ecuador, and Dominican Republic) and education rights (Nepal and Pakistan). Through these clubs children also began to understand that with rights also comes responsibility. Thus, in the cases of Bangladesh, Ghana and China children are responsible for keeping the latrines clean, sweeping the school compounds and taking on other roles.

### **Case Study: Supporting the Agenda for the Rights of Indigenous Children and Adolescents in Ecuador**

ECUARUNARI is the leading organization which represents the Kichwa speaking population and promotes the rights of indigenous communities in Ecuador. In consultations in rural and urban areas the organization developed an agenda for the rights of indigenous children which included the demand for intercultural bilingual education. Together with other organizations, Plan has provided technical support, funding and strengthening of ECUARUNARI. This has enabled ECUARUNARI to put the rights of indigenous children and adolescents on the national agenda, highlighting diversity and cultural identity. Through Plan's support, ECUARUNARI consulted with children across the country and encouraged participation in provincial, national and international events as well as multi-stakeholder workshops with parents, teachers and leaders. This has raised the awareness and visibility of indigenous children and resulted in the participation of children at the Sixth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2007.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Plan Thematic Evaluation of Primary Education, 2009

Plan also works close with local communities, Ministries of Education and in partnerships with non governmental organizations to improve education programs, strengthen policy commitments and prioritize safe and effective learning environments. In Bangladesh, Plan's child centered community development approach has helped to empower the Village Development Committees to take increasing responsibility. With support from these committees, teachers, directors, children and the school management committees, Plan's efforts to raise awareness of child rights and the recruitment, mentoring and professional development of committee resource persons has resulted in a decrease early marriage and child labor. More children are also enrolling in school, attendance is high, children are staying in school and progression rates are above the national average.

#### **Case Study: NGO coordination for improved curricula in Sierra Leone**

Plan supported the creation of an NGO Coordination Desk and a Teacher Training Coordination Desk at the Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone. Both initiatives enhanced the sharing of activities, experiences and good practices amongst international and local NGOs, teacher training institutions (colleges and polytechnics). Through these coordinating mechanisms, the Ministry was able to more effectively carry out a review of the curriculum and syllabus for primary schools and teacher training with a wide range of stakeholders.<sup>14</sup>

Working with governments in 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean Plan is a leading player in ending violence in schools through its *Learn without Fear* campaign. By working with stakeholders at all levels to prevent violence in schools, spreading information about the scale and severity of violence in educational settings, Plan is contributing to increasing the retention of girls and boys in a safe and nurturing school environment and ensuring policy commitments are reinforced and implemented. Plan has also facilitated the registration of over 40 million people in 32 countries as part of the *Birth Registration* Campaign. This vital legal certificate has helped to make sure that girls and boys can enroll in school and sit also government exams.

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<sup>14</sup> Plan Thematic Evaluation of Primary Education, 2009