

Aaron Benavot/Manos Antoninis/Nicole Bella/Marcos Delprato/
Joanna Härmä/Catherine Jere/Priyadarshani Joshi/Nihan Köseleci
Blanchy/Helen Longlands/Alasdair McWilliam/Asma Zubairi

Education for All 2000–2015: Review and Perspectives¹

Abstract

This paper provides a brief overview of global progress in achieving the six EFA goals and international aid for EFA policies. It shows that despite modest movement in achieving the EFA goals – some of it due to explicit policies and actions undertaken by governments, international agencies, donors and NGOs – since Dakar, progress has been uneven. Much of the broad EFA agenda remains unfinished, as none of the goals was reached. The global EFA mechanisms that did work, often did so despite – rather than because of – international attempts to coordinate EFA. Much hope had been placed on external financing to accelerate EFA progress. While aid did increase, the overall volume of external assistance fell well short of the assessed need, was insufficiently targeted to countries most in need, declined as a share of recipient governments' budgets over the period, and was not always delivered effectively.

Keywords: *Education for All, Global Education Policy, International Aid, Education Goals, Dakar Framework for Action, Universal Primary Education, Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, World Education Forum, Human Rights*

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel bietet einen kurzen Überblick über die globalen Fortschritte zur Erreichung der sechs EFA-Ziele und der internationalen Hilfe für EFA-Strategien. Es wird gezeigt, dass trotz bescheidener Bewegungen in Richtung der EFA-Zielerreichung – einiges davon durch explizite Richtlinien und Handlungen von Regierungen, internationalen Organisationen, Gebern und NGOs – die Fortschritte seit Dakar uneinheitlich sind. Ein Großteil der breit angelegten EFA-Agenda bleibt unvollendet, da keines der Ziele erreicht wurde. Die globalen EFA-Mechanismen funktionierten trotz, nicht wegen internationaler EFA-Koordinationsbemühungen. Viel Hoffnung war auf die externe Finanzierung von EFA gelegt worden, um EFA-Fortschritte zu beschleunigen. Während die Beihilfen zugenommen haben, fiel das Gesamtvolumen der Außenhilfe deutlich unter das als notwendig Ermittelte, wurde unzureichend in den bedürftigsten Ländern fokussiert, ist als Anteil der Budgets der Empfängerregierungen für den Zeitraum zurückgegangen und wurde nicht immer effektiv ausgeliefert.

Schlüsselworte: *Bildung für alle, globalen Bildungspolitik, internationale Hilfsmittel, Bildungsziele, Aktionsrahmen von Dakar, Grundschulbildung, Globaler Bildungsbericht, UNESCO, Weltbildungsforum, Menschenrechte*

Introduction

The Education for All (EFA) movement tackled ambitious challenges in the wake of the establishment of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. Some global progress has been achieved, and the pace of change has quickened since 2000, with more children entering school and completing their education. Yet, there have been notable failures. Educational development continues to be unequally shared. Disadvantaged children still lag behind their peers. The probability that children from the poorest quintile of households in low and middle income countries were not completing primary school in 2010 was five times as high as the corresponding probability of children from the richest quintile – a gap that has increased compared to 2000. Hundreds of millions of adults, especially women, are denied their right to literacy and numeracy.

This paper aims to provide a succinct assessment of whether the world achieved the EFA goals and stakeholders upheld their commitments to implement the agenda.

Taking stock of progress towards EFA goals

Goal 1 – Early childhood care and education

Despite improvements, an unacceptably high number of children suffer from ill health. Between 1990 and 2000, global child mortality fell from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births to 76, and it fell further to 46 in 2013. However, the 2015 target of 30 deaths per 1,000 live births is unlikely to be met. East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to do so, but sub-Saharan Africa is not, and its child mortality rate is expected to be above the global average, despite progress accelerating after 2000.

Nutrition has improved in recent years, yet, in 2013, it is estimated that 161 million children under 5 were moderately or severely stunted – that is, short for their age, a robust indicator of long-term malnutrition. The proportion of children who were malnourished reduced from 40 % in 1990 to 25 % in 2013 (UNICEF et al. 2014). The global burden of malnu-

trition is unequally distributed, with 38 % of children in sub-Saharan Africa suffering from malnutrition in 2013.

Since 2000, early childhood education services have expanded considerably. The global pre-primary education gross enrolment ratio increased from 27 % in 1990 to 33 % in 1999 and 54 % in 2012, and is projected to reach 58 % by 2015. However, there are wide differences among regions. While the ratio was 74 % in Latin America and the Caribbean and 89 % in North America and Europe in 2012, it was only 20 % in sub-Saharan Africa and 25 % in the Arab States. Gaps exist also within countries, especially between rural and urban areas, rich and poor families and communities, and thriving and deprived regions. Part of the reason is that governments have yet to assume sufficient responsibility for pre-primary education: as of 2012, private providers were catering for 31 % of all enrolled children, rising to 75 % in the Arab States. Constraints in collecting data from unregulated non-state providers mean these figures are likely to be an underestimate in some countries.

Goal 2 – Universal primary education

Universal primary education was the most prominent of the EFA goals, as reflected by its inclusion in the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, the target is still far from being met. Based on the trends of the past five years, 57 million children will be out of school in 2015, although significantly down from 106 million in 1999. There are wide regional variations in the fall in out-of-school numbers since 1999. South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa have accounted for three-quarters of the world's out-of-school population throughout the Dakar period, but have seen different trends. South and West Asia experienced the fastest decline of all regions, contributing more than half the total reduction in the number of out of school children. In India, the out-of-school population fell more than 90 %. By contrast, in sub-Saharan Africa, progress in reducing the number of out-of-school children has stalled since 2007. In 2012, 21 % of the region's primary school age population, or 30 million, was still not in school.

About 25 million, or 43 % of children currently out of school are expected never even to make it to school. The percentage is considerably higher in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. There is also considerable gender disparity, with girls more likely never to go to school (48 % of the total, compared with 37 % for boys), while boys are relatively more likely to drop out.

The problem of out-of-school children is becoming increasingly concentrated in conflict-affected countries, where globally the proportion increased from 30 % in 1999 to 36 % in 2012. The trend is particularly strong in the Arab States where the proportion increased from 63 % to 87 %.

Major inequality exists regarding those who are out of school. Analysis of household surveys shows that, among 63 countries observed during 2008–2012, where an average of 14 % of children were out of school, the rate was 22 % for those in the poorest household quintile and 6 % for those in the richest (UIS and UNICEF, 2015). In addition to poverty, barriers to education can include children's gender, ethnic and linguistic background, race, disability, geographical location and livelihood.

Enrolment is a partial measure of whether universal primary education has been achieved, given that success should be

judged with respect to whether all children 'have access to and complete' primary education. Analysis of household surveys shows that the percentage of those who finished primary school in low and middle income countries increased, from 77 % in 1999 to 81 % in 2008. It is estimated to reach 84 % in 2015. This means, nevertheless, that one in six children in those countries – or almost 100 million – will not have completed primary school. And more than one in three in low income countries will not have done so.

Goal 3 – Youth and adult skills

The third EFA goal focused not only on formal education in schools but also on experiences outside school, such as on-the-job training and other opportunities over the life course. Foundation skills, including literacy and numeracy, are essential for meeting daily needs, succeeding in the world of work and acquiring transferable skills and technical and vocational skills. The most important indicator of progress in opportunities to acquire foundation skills is access to secondary school. Globally, the gross enrolment ratio rose in lower secondary education from 71 % in 1999 to 85 % in 2012, and in upper secondary from 45 % to 62 %. Wide disparity exists among regions: while the lower secondary gross enrolment ratio was above 95 % in most regions in 2012, it was 89 % in the Arab States, 81 % in South and West Asia and 50 % in sub-Saharan Africa. Inequality is more pronounced at the upper secondary level, where the gross enrolment ratio was around 100 % in North America and Western Europe and in Central Asia, but 32 % in sub-Saharan Africa.

Another measure of progress towards the third EFA goal is the number of adolescents of lower secondary school age who are out of school. While the number has fallen since 1999 by 36 % to 63 million in 2012, progress has all but stagnated since 2007. Moreover, the reduction has been much more modest than for primary school age children. Progress in East Asia and the Pacific accounts for more than half of the total decline. About 42 % of out-of-school adolescents now live in South and West Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, 21 million adolescents remained out of school over the entire period. Any progress in enrolment has been cancelled by the increase in the population of this age group since 1999.

Analysis of household surveys shows that the percentage of those who finish lower secondary school is significantly lower than these measures of participation suggest. The lower secondary completion rate increased from 25 % in 1999 to 31 % in 2008 in low income countries, from 52 % to 64 % in lower middle income countries and from 81 % to 85 % in upper middle income countries. Overall, one in three individuals in low and middle income countries are estimated not to have finished lower secondary school in 2015. In low income countries, three in five individuals will not have done so.

Data sources are fragmented for technical and vocational skills. While this kind of knowledge is often best acquired on the job, for instance in apprenticeship programmes, no systematic information on such programmes currently exists. The information that is available indicates that the share of technical and vocational education in total secondary education enrolment has remained at around 10 % since 1999, with relatively small variations in regional trends, such as a decline in the proportion of enrolment in technical and vocational education in the Arab States.

Goal 4 – Adult literacy

Progress has been slower towards the fourth EFA goal than towards other goals. The number of illiterate adults is estimated to have fallen by 12 %, from 880 million in the period 1985–1994 to 781 million in the period 2005–2012. Yet, almost all the decline took place in the 1990s. Since 2000, the number of illiterate adults fell by only 1%. In relative terms, while the rate of adult illiteracy fell from 24 % to 18 % between 1990 and 2000, the pace of decline then slowed. According to the most recent estimates in 2012, the adult illiteracy rate has fallen to 16 % and is projected to be 14 % by 2015. Thus the projected fall in the adult illiteracy rate would be 23 % between 2000 and 2015, well below the Dakar target of halving illiteracy. Women make up nearly two-thirds of the total number of illiterate adults and since 2000 there has been no progress in reducing this share.

Since 2000, adult literacy rates have risen fastest in the Arab States, from 67 % to 78 %. Nevertheless, as a result of population growth, the actual number of illiterate adults has only fallen from 58 million to 52 million. South and West Asia has experienced the second fastest increase in adult literacy rates (from 59 % to 63 %). Yet it has seen its population of illiterate adults remain stable at around 400 million. As a result, the region accounts for a higher share of the global population of illiterate adults now (53 %) than in 2000 (50 %). In sub-Saharan Africa, where the adult literacy rate has only increased from 57 % to 59 % since 2000, the actual number of illiterate adults has grown by 19 % to 187 million in 2012. However, monitoring of the region's progress is complicated by changes in the source of literacy data in many countries. Thus estimates of adult literacy in sub-Saharan Africa for the most recent period may not be strictly comparable with the estimates for 2000 or for other regions.

In order to move towards universal adult literacy, youth literacy rates need to improve. Globally, the youth literacy rates stands at 89 %, five percentage points higher than the adult literacy rate. In the Arab States, the youth literacy rate of 90 % exceeds the adult literacy rate by 12 percentage points. In sub-Saharan Africa, the youth literacy rate exceeds the adult literacy rate by 10 percentage points (69 % versus 59 %).

Goal 5 – Gender parity and equality

Among the EFA goals, the greatest progress has been achieved in gender parity. In primary education, there was considerable disparity in 1999 at the global level, with 92 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. By 2012, the global average had increased to 97, just above the threshold parity. South and West Asia made the strongest progress, achieving parity from the lowest starting point (83 girls enrolled for every 100 boys). Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States halved gender gaps but remained the regions furthest from the target at 92 and 93 girls, respectively, for every 100 boys.

Although progress has been made, gender disparity is wider and more varied in secondary education. At the global level, the disparity in 1999 was 91 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. By 2012, the global average had increased to almost 97 girls, just below the threshold of parity. South and West Asia again made the strongest progress from 75 girls enrolled for every 100 boys, to 93, with rapid progress at both the lower

and upper secondary levels. Sub-Saharan Africa was the region left furthest behind with the slowest progress towards parity, increasing from 82 to 84 girls for every 100 boys. Latin America and the Caribbean was the only region with disparity at the expense of boys: 93 boys enrolled for every 100 girls. These averages mask considerable diversity. Of the 155 countries with three data points for primary education, 52 % had already achieved gender parity in 1999. By 2005, the original target deadline, the share had only increased to 57 %, and in 2012 it was still just 65 %.

Furthermore, gender equality is a more complex notion than gender parity and harder to measure. It requires moving beyond counting the number of boys and girls in school to exploring the quality of girls' and boys' experiences in the classroom and school community, their achievements in education institutions and their aspirations for the future. Such assessment requires systematic analysis of whether countries have been able to address discriminatory social norms, remove gender bias from curricula and textbooks, improve education processes and tackle gender-based violence in schools.

Goal 6 – Quality of education

Even though good quality education has been at the core of EFA goals, international attention has focused until recently on universal primary education. A discernible shift in emphasis towards quality and learning is apparent. In 2000, the task of monitoring quality was only conceivable in terms of measuring inputs. Now, learning outcomes are considered key for reviewing whether quality has improved, though they should not be the only criterion. Since 2000, countries' interest in improving their understanding of education system outcomes has rapidly expanded. Government action has not been the only route to effective assessment systems for informing national policy. Citizen-led, household-based assessment initiatives began in India in 2005 and have been adapted in Pakistan, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, Mali and Senegal. Together, they reached more than a million children in 2012. In addition to the growing use of national assessments, countries have increasingly joined cross-national and cross-system comparisons of student achievement.

In primary education, 1.4 million additional teachers were needed as of 2012 to achieve universal primary education by 2015 while ensuring that all primary school age children were in classes with no more than 40 pupils per teacher. The global pupil/teacher ratio fell only slightly, from 26:1 in 1999 to 24:1 in 2012. In sub-Saharan Africa it grew from 42:1 in 1999 to 45:1 in 2008 before falling back to 42:1 by 2012, still well above levels suitable for disadvantaged learners. In secondary education, the global pupil/teacher ratio fell from 18:1 to 17:1 between 1999 and 2012. The largest decrease was in South and West Asia, from 32:1 to 25:1, suggesting that the region prioritized investment in teachers at the secondary more than the primary level, where the ratio stagnated at 35:1. These ratios do not indicate teacher distribution within countries, and are silent on the quality of teachers and their professional training. Lacking a global consensus on a definition of trained teachers, the available indicators refer to national definitions. In primary education, it is possible to compare progress among 50 countries, where the average percentage of trained teachers increased from 77 % to 90 %, indicating that some progress has taken place.

There are additional factors that contribute to quality education including conditions in schools, management of schools, curricula and the language of instruction. But systematic evidence on global trends for many of these factors is not available.

International development assistance

Insufficient financing, particularly by aid donors, has been one of the main obstacles to achieving the EFA goals. Donors have not met the commitment they made at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 to ensure that no country would be prevented from achieving education for all due to lack of resources. While aid to basic education grew by 6 % a year, on average, the share of total aid disbursed for education did not change, never exceeding 10 %. By contrast, the share of total aid for health increased from 9 % to 14 %.

International development assistance has focused on primary education, but there has also been significant spending on post-secondary education. Basic education², especially primary education, attracted donor support because it was directly related to poverty reduction and naturally linked to the education MDG. Aid to basic education peaked over 2009 and 2010. Then between 2010 and 2012, aid disbursements to this level fell by 15 %, or US\$921 million. This was a larger decline than for aid to post-secondary education, which fell by 6 %. In absolute volume, aid to post-secondary education was higher than that to basic in 2012. Moreover, the large share of aid for post-secondary education supports students from developing countries studying in donor countries, rather than strengthening higher education systems in developing countries.

The narrow focus of the education MDG on universal primary education is one common explanation for why external funding for education has focused so heavily on primary education to the neglect of other EFA goals. As a share of total disbursements to basic education, aid to basic life skills for youth and adults and to early childhood education has fallen. On average, their shares were 10 % and 3 %, respectively, in 2002–2004 but 6 % and 2 % in 2010–2012. Donor strategies focus little on other key EFA areas, including adult education, distance learning, non-formal education and education for children with special needs (cf. Mercer 2014).

Aid to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa, home to over half of the world's out-of-school children, grew steadily from 2002 then fell from 2009 onwards. On average in 2002–2004, 47 % of total aid disbursed to basic education was for sub-Saharan Africa, but by 2010–2012 the level had fallen to 31 %. While growth rates in aid disbursements for basic education to developing countries averaged 6 % a year, the sub-Saharan Africa region saw the second lowest annual average growth at 1 % after Central and Eastern Europe.

The period since Dakar has seen increased commitment to improve not just the quantity but also the governance of international aid. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) – formerly the EFA Fast Track Initiative, established in 2002 – could play a critical role in the global coordination of education aid, even though it lacks the financial support to do this effectively and its focus is almost exclusively on the second EFA goal. In the 39 countries which received programme implementation grants over 2004–2012, the share of GPE in total

aid disbursement to basic education increased from 4 % in 2004–2006 to 16 % in 2012–2012. In terms of resource allocation to the countries most in need, on average, over 2010–2012, 81 % of total GPE disbursements were to low income countries, compared with 42 % for members of the OECD Development Assistance. Similarly, it increased its share to fragile states from an average of 16 % over 2004–2006 to 35 % over 2010–2012.

With protracted emergencies occurring more frequently, the education sector has tried to convince the humanitarian aid sector that investment in education is life-saving. However, aid to education continues to be neglected within an already under-resourced humanitarian aid system. In 2012, governments, UN agencies, the private sector and civil society organisation called for doubling the percentage of total humanitarian aid earmarked for education to at least 4 % of all funds from humanitarian appeals. Despite this, the sector has not come close to the target. In 2013, it received 2 % of funds from humanitarian appeals. It continues to receive one of the smallest proportions of requests for humanitarian aid – 40 % of what is requested in 2013, compared with 86 % for the food sector and 57 % for the health sector. Moreover, while 4 % was a useful target for advocacy, it falls short of the needs of all beneficiaries. Even if the donor community had allocated 4 % of humanitarian funding to education, some 19.5 million children would have not been covered by the UN consolidated appeal process (Education Cannot Wait 2014).

Humanitarian funding for education in conflict-affected countries in 2012 was US\$105 million, much less significant than the US\$1.1 billion in development aid funding for education. The difference shows the lack of prioritization of education by humanitarian funding, which is particularly problematic in countries that receive more humanitarian funding than development aid. In Mali, development aid to basic education decreased rapidly from US\$136 million in 2008 to US\$40 million in 2012 (OECD-DAC 2014), yet since conflict began in 2010 the education sector has been one of the most poorly funded through humanitarian aid, which has failed to make up for the reduction in development funding. Moreover, humanitarian and development aid have different governance structures, which must collaborate to address the education sector's disadvantage.

Conclusion

Since 2000, there has been a major global effort to ensure that every child is in school. The EFA agenda was not seen as broad or universal enough, and countries took less ownership. Meanwhile, the focus on universal primary enrolment meant less attention on other critical issues, such as learning, early childhood care and education, and adult literacy. Overall, not even the target of universal primary education is reached. The most disadvantaged continue to be the last to benefit from progress in education, millions of children are not learning the basics, and the acquisition of literacy skills among adults remains a low priority for governments and donors. Despite this unfinished agenda, there have been achievements that should not be underestimated. There is evidence that the world will have advanced by 2015 beyond where it would have been if the trends of the 1990s had persisted.

With a new post-2015 agenda, how can the international community achieve more, learning from the period since Dakar? What are the lessons emerging from the past 15 years?

The Dakar Framework for Action intended to bring positive change to global education through various mechanisms and processes. Different types of global interventions (coordination mechanisms, campaign and initiatives) were proposed to support countries. If successfully implemented, these interventions were expected to lead to five key outputs that would speed up achievement of the EFA goals (Figure 1). Areas of progress were characterized by a strong technical focus. The global mechanisms, initiatives and campaigns that have been relatively influential have a clear set of objectives and dedicated strategic and technical capacity, are financed collectively and have overt political support and backing from influential bodies. They are evaluated regularly and in most cases have well-defined audiences for their work. Monitoring education progress since Dakar has also improved and expanded. Areas of weakness were seen in interventions requiring coordination, political commitment and influence, which tended to be looser, voluntary mechanisms, technically competent but politically weak (cf. Faul and Packer 2015). The global coordination model, especially within the United Nations, has received relatively little scrutiny. Accountability for any global movement is inarguably a challenge, but in this case was absent and unaddressed.

A key lesson emerging over the past 15 years is that, while technical solutions are important, gaining political influence and traction is of even greater significance, and is, indeed, essential for realizing the scale of reform and action re-

quired to achieve EFA at the national level, and hence globally. An even more ambitious set of education policy priorities is being embedded in the post-2015 vision of global sustainable development. They are meant to be more universal in application, transformative in intent, and inclusive and equitable in practice than the EFA goals. However, there are several potential risks lurking on the horizon, including the concern that unfinished aspects of the EFA agenda will get sidetracked; targeted funding for the poorest countries and most marginalized populations will decline; and that country commitment to ensuring free, good quality basic education for all will get diverted. Furthermore, placing education priorities in the midst of a broad sustainable development agenda may risk promoting a predominantly instrumentalist view of education, as a driver for economic, political and environmental change. The potency of these risks remains to be seen.

Notes

- 1 Detailed evidence for the arguments put forward in this article can be found in UNESCO (2015) *Education for All: Achievements and Challenges*. The EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) monitors progress towards the six EFA goals, to which more than 160 countries agreed as part of the Dakar Framework for Action, adopted during the World Education Forum held in April 2000 at Dakar Senegal. The GMR is collectively drafted by a group of education researchers, experts and academics of varying nationalities, who hold advanced degrees in education, social sciences or development and have acquired considerable experience in education settings around the world. The independent report they create is published by UNESCO, funded by external donors, and is widely considered an authoritative reference seeking to inform, influence and sustain national, regional and international commitments to EFA. Between 2002 and 2015, twelve reports were published, nine of which covered special themes including gender, quality, literacy, early childhood care and education, marginalization, governance, armed conflict and education, and teaching and learning.

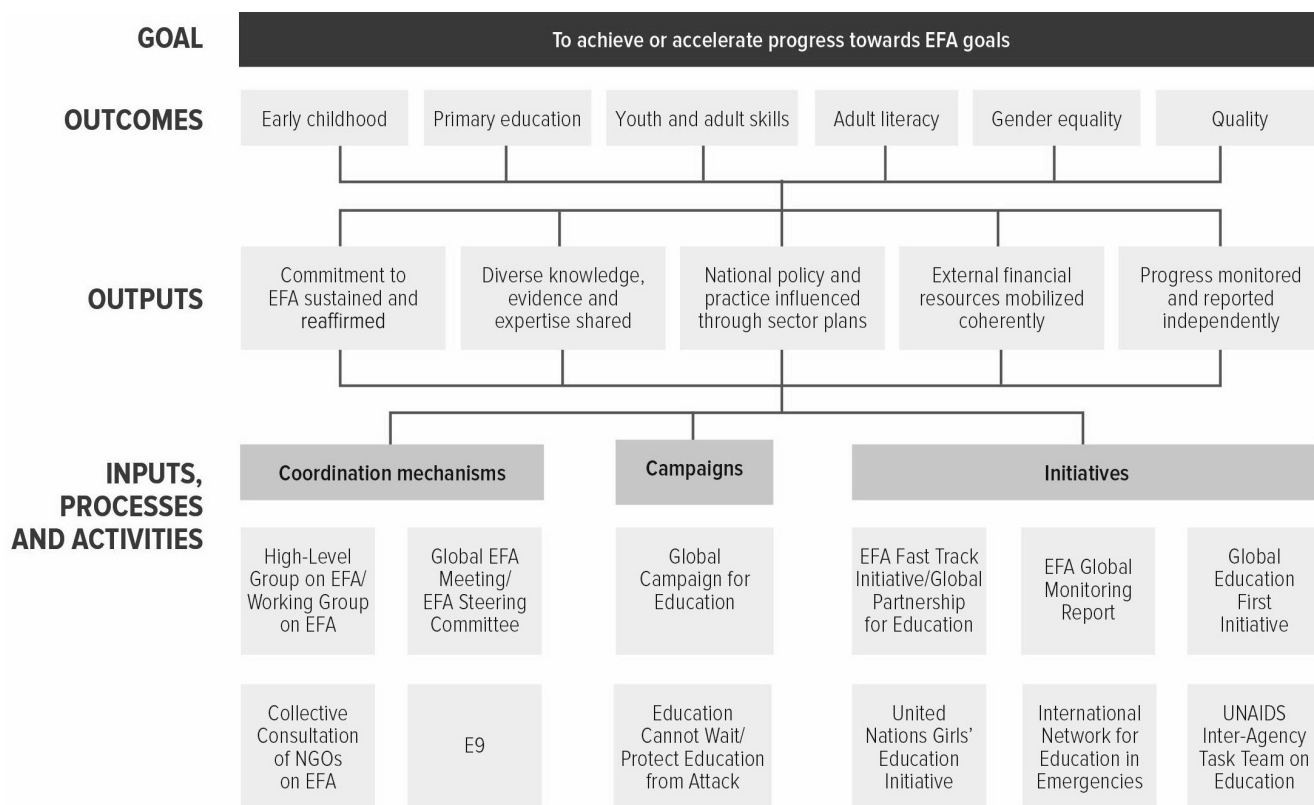


Fig. 1: Logical framework for the expected effects of the global EFA architecture. Source: 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges Summary*. Paris, UNESCO.

2 This refers to basic education as defined in the OECD Creditor Reporting System, comprising early childhood education, primary education and basic life skills for youth and adults.

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Aaron Benavot

is Director of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report. He is currently on leave from the University at Albany-SUNY, where he serves as Professor of Global Education Policy in the School of Education. Benavot's scholarship explores educational problématique from comparative, global and critical perspectives (albany.academia.edu/AaronBenavot). He has recently written about the globalization of official curricular policies, the growth and power of international and national learning assessments and the conceptualization of adult literacy.

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GMR team authors include:

Aaron Benavot, Director
 Manos Antoninis, Senior Policy Analyst
 Nicole Bella, Senior Statistician and Policy Analyst
 Marcos Delprato, Research Officer
 Joanna Härmä, Research Officer
 Catherine Jere, Research Officer
 Priyadarshani Joshi, Research Officer
 Nihan Köseleci Blanchy, Research Officer
 Helen Longlands, Research Officer
 Alasdair McWilliam, Research Officer
 Asma Zubairi, Research Officer



„Schule für alle“ aus der Sicht von Luka (11 Jahre).