

# World Education Forum

Dakar, Senegal  
26-28 April 2000

Education for All  
2000 Assessment



T H E M A T I C   S T U D I E S

## Education for All and Children Who are Excluded



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## Education for All and Children Who are Excluded

Co-ordinated by the United Nations Children's Fund

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# Contents

<b>■ Introduction</b>	2
<hr/>	
<b>■ Patterns of exclusion: causes and conditions</b>	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Education systems and schools.....	4
Exclusion at the micro level: the school.....	5
Exclusion at the meso level: the education bureaucracy.....	7
Exclusion at the macro level: national education policy.....	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Socio-economic and political conditions.....	10
Who the excluded children are.....	12
Where excluded children are found.....	14
What excluded children are doing.....	17
<input type="checkbox"/> Summary.....	18
<hr/>	
<b>■ Practice and progress since Jomtien</b>	19
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction.....	19
<input type="checkbox"/> Expanded participation in a holistic framework.....	21
Expanded participation.....	21
Holistic and synergistic action.....	24
<input type="checkbox"/> Enabling processes: engaging with teachers.....	29
<input type="checkbox"/> Local relevance: decentralization.....	30
<input type="checkbox"/> Protecting the most vulnerable.....	31
Girls.....	31
Working children and child labour.....	32
Children in war.....	35
Indigenous children.....	37
Children with disabilities.....	37
Children with HIV/AIDS.....	38
<hr/>	
<b>■ Moving forward: debates, challenges, lessons</b>	39
<input type="checkbox"/> Debates.....	39
<input type="checkbox"/> Challenges.....	40
<input type="checkbox"/> Lessons from good practice.....	42
<hr/>	
<b>■ References</b>	45
<hr/>	
<b>■ Further reading</b>	50
<hr/>	
<b>■ Abbreviations and acronyms</b>	52
<hr/>	
<b>■ Individual contributors</b>	52
<hr/>	

# Introduction

*Each child counts.* The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms the right of *all* children to relevant and good quality education. It confirms the belief of many cultures that there is a social contract and moral commitment on the part of states to ensure the equity and well-being of all citizens. It brings the moral weight of an international instrument to propel a major shift in perspective for states and donors as they implement action to achieve Education for All (EFA).

The CRC reconfirms the EFA imperative of an 'expanded vision' of education: that all children have the right to learn at all stages of their development, and to do so in ways that are appropriate and easily accessible. It reconfirms that this learning must be such that it contributes to children's physical, psychosocial, emotional and intellectual development. Under the umbrella of the CRC and the EFA, children's right to education cannot be played off against their rights to health, protection or participation. Nor can it take second place to the environment, defence or structural adjustment in determining national priorities. National and international policies, development analyses and planning, advocacy and interventions – each must take a holistic and inclusive focus in ensuring that *all* children realize *all* their rights, including the right to education.

Moreover, as reiterated at the EFA Sub-Saharan Africa Conference (Johannesburg, December 1999), not just any kind of education will do. Education must be such that it enhances the potential of children and young people to respect themselves and others, participate in the decisions of their society, live in peace and dignity, and earn a living. Increases in the percentage of children reached are important, but are no longer sufficient. Quality counts. All children have the right of access to *effective* opportunities for learning. Exceptions cannot simply be argued away on the basis of 'especially difficult circumstances'. There should be no excluded children.

*Exclusion from education is part of an intricate web of human rights violations. It reflects a complex, progressive and sustained process of 'being excluded'.* Millions of children are, of course, excluded from education, largely because they are excluded from development benefits in general. Exclusion is interactive and comprehensive. It touches all aspects of the lives of affected children. It results either in their having no access to education or in their being poorly served when they are there. Exclusion is a broad-brush phenomenon. Children who do not go to school are also children living in conditions of poverty, sociocultural marginalization, geographical isolation, racial and/or gender bias. They are children living with the corollary burdens of disease and disability, sexual exploitation, indentured and injurious labour, or forced involvement in civil and military conflict. Their exclusion from education is simply one more manifestation of a web of rights violations.

This is a particularly tragic exclusion. Without access to good quality education, children are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, capacities and self-confidence necessary, as children and later as adults, to act on their own behalf in changing the circumstances which are excluding them. Within the context of the CRC, then, the education of children whose rights are being denied must be considered in two respects: how their situation is affecting their access to education and learning achievement; and how education can better serve to end their broader exclusion, or at least mitigate its harm.

*Exclusion from education, then, is not a single 'one-off' event in the lives of the children affected.* Having no access to school, or access only to those that are ineffectual and harmful, needs to be understood as part of a *pattern of systemic exclusion*, one linked to other social, economic and political conditions which can, in effect, serve as proxy. The child who consistently does not go to school is also the child who consistently suffers from poor nutrition and health care, from inadequate water, sanitation and shelter; who lives in a family with an unstable income and limited opportunities to participate; whose community is in conflict.

As defined here, exclusion from education must therefore be understood *in context*; in the complex of conditions and factors which together act to keep a child from participating in effective, relevant and well-organized learning experiences. For example:

**Children within the family and the community.** The way children are treated in school, and the way in which they participate with the learning opportunities and relationships they experience there, are influenced by the particular intellectual, physical and personality characteristics they bring with them. The family influences these characteristics by its form (nuclear, extended, single-parent) and its members. The family influences the way a child develops by its beliefs about the place of children in the social structure and the importance of facilitating learning; by how and to whom its resources are allocated; by how it deals with gender. The values, knowledge and skills present within a family have a profound impact on its ability and willingness to meet its child's basic needs: health care and nutrition, psychosocial nurturing and cognitive stimulation. The community in which a family lives also has a determining role in the life of a child by how it treats its citizens: by the range of socio-economic and cultural diversity it accepts; by its mechanisms for resolving conflicts; by its economy and infrastructure; and by whether it is rural or urban, geographically isolated or nationally and internationally 'connected'.

**The school within the education system.** The school exacerbates or mitigates exclusion by how it interacts with the children, families and communities it serves. It also does so by how it relates to its own bureaucracy and manages the resources

and policies it receives. Related to both of these, the school influences exclusion by its physical safety, the professionalism and commitment of its leadership and teachers, and the quality and range of materials it has available. It creates and mitigates exclusion by how it welcomes children; by its flexibility in matching each child's learning style with its teaching methods; and by its capacity to value – and build learning opportunities around – the diversity of cultures, talents and interests each child brings. The education bureaucracy, in turn, plays a part in all of this by its policies and competencies in curriculum development and teacher training, its decisions on language of instruction, its level of decentralization, and the quality and consistency of its monitoring and supervision.

**National education policy within the society and international community.** Education policies are influenced most notably by the overall national political regime of the country, its socio-economic environment and its propensity to countenance violence and make war. Some governments lack the resources to educate all children; others choose not to use their resources for this purpose. The development status and culture of the society at large, and its relations with the international financial, professional and technical-assistance community also influence the level and quality of attention given to education. National education policies influence exclusion through their budget allocation and distribution decisions; by the attention they give to displaced, hard-to-reach and culturally 'different' families and children; and by their broad education philosophy and the weighting of programme alternatives therein.

*The reality of these **multiple exclusionary factors** is particularly invidious. It makes finding entry points and facilitating change difficult, and it injures children in multiple, interactive ways over the long term.* It is a reality of deficit for children which goes far beyond schools and education systems, while having a profound impact on both of these in their capacity to be inclusive. It is in the specific mix of characteristics and interactions of any one context that the scope, causes, consequences, severity and dynamics of exclusion for each child will be found. So, too, its resolution. Without families, communities and societies which can provide protection and nurturing for children, and which can support their establishing a broad capacity to learn, these children are less likely to be able to make fully effective use of any learning opportunities that are available. They will be less able to acquire the knowledge, skills and sense of empowerment necessary for their continued development or for living effectively and co-operatively. They will be less likely to pass these capacities on to their children. For both individuals and societies, exclusion is a tragedy because its impact is now and in the future. It is inter-generational and all-pervasive.

*The key, of course, is in breaking the cycle, and this involves a consideration of education beyond children and beyond schooling.* It involves a vision of education – its policies, planning and actions – which does not assume narrow and linear definitions

of who and what 'counts'. It is clear, for example, that children are unlikely to move out of poverty, create healthy living conditions or confront their marginalization – or go to good schools – on their own. The Jomtien Conference recognized this in affirming within the ambit of EFA the importance of adults learning to earn a living and to participate effectively, and of families learning to care for, protect and educate their children. It recognized adult literacy and out-of-school education as legitimate and core elements of basic education for all.

Further, the conference recognized that children do not only begin to learn at 6 years of age. Nor do they learn only in classrooms or by rote. It made the early development and education of children also a necessary part of the EFA dynamic. So, too, are teaching strategies promoting problem-solving, critical thinking, values clarification and life-skills; and learning which takes place both in the school as well as in less formal settings. Education for all means considering the child as a whole and unique learning person, one who needs to live in a similarly learning environment. It means, therefore, designing education contents and programmes suited to each child, in the context of families and communities.

*The CRC and EFA, therefore, commit societies to 'seamless' education systems, ensuring equity in learning for all.* Beyond the specific social values and economic priorities a society wishes to express through its education system, the global commitments to education it has made through the EFA Declaration and the CRC require it to ensure that 'every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs' (WCEFA, Article 1). These needs are actually tools, of course: the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to live, develop and participate. Helping excluded children to acquire them implies a commitment to reconsidering what constitutes the legitimate playing field of education. At a basic level, all children must have access to education programmes or schools with competent teachers, relevant curricula, and safe, secure and healthy physical and social environments.

Unfortunately, education systems are complex and traditionally staid social institutions. In most societies, formal schools have been the principal, in most cases the only, socially sanctioned means of providing such education. As such, they have realized significant results for many children, but not for all. As loosely linked and administratively ponderous systems, they have been limited in their capacity to respond and reach out to diversity. They are rarely able to act with speed or flexibility in ways beneficial to large segments of their constituencies, especially to those children and families who do not fit the mainstream. Traditional schooling has not been, and will never be, 'enough' to reach all children with sustainable and relevant learning opportunities. In many societies, it *creates* exclusion both by failing to reach significant numbers of children, and by defining others as unreachable and unteachable, as drop-outs and repeaters.

The 'problem' of excluded children rests, then, with those who are failing to include them. Education for all is not schooling for all. The CRC and EFA require a movement away from the narrow paradigm distinguishing formal schooling from 'the rest'. They require societies to push the parameters, to recognize and provide for *alternative means* of supporting children's learning that are equal in quality, status and availability. They require changing the paradigm that has been allowing systemic discrimination to persist and become more widespread. Exclusion of children happens at every point within education systems. Inclusion also needs to happen at all points.

*Inclusion in this sense becomes very much a dynamic phenomenon.* A country's formal education system presents the official expression of what that society accepts as the values and activities appropriate for children's learning through the human and financial resources it allocates and the way it manages these. Through policies and resources, it determines who gets in, what they learn and in what way. The CRC and EFA, however, require that *all* children 'get in' and that they learn. This requires education provision to be set within an interactive and broadly based framework; no single factor can on its own create or solve exclusion, nor can any one be dismissed as irrelevant. *Serious policy commitment* from the top of the national hierarchy, and *sustained and integrated action* throughout the whole of the education system and in association with all who touch the lives of children, are fundamental. ■

## Patterns of exclusion: causes and conditions

Ultimately, it is the children themselves who suffer the problem of exclusion. It is the individual child who does not have a chance to experience effective and relevant education and whose present situation and future options are consequently put at risk. But while children suffer the problem, *they neither create nor maintain their exclusion.* They are denied education, or decline to participate, almost always as a consequence of exclusionary conditions not of their own making. Within the framework of the CRC, neither these conditions nor the decision not to participate (whether or not consciously taken) can mitigate the obligation of their families, communities and governments, or of international agencies, to ensure them access and quality. The 'problem', therefore, rests in these hands, as those with the responsibility and power to take actions that make education readily available to children in forms appropriate to their learning, and to avoid actions that do not.

The Introduction attempted to define a framework for considering exclusion as a complex socio-political and institutional phenomenon. This chapter looks in more detail at (i) how education systems and schools are continuing to exclude, by failing to pull vulnerable children in and pushing others out; and (ii) the conditions and factors in society which similarly create exclusion, by denying many children access to effective education and by making it difficult for other children to learn.

### Education systems and schools

Exclusion is interactive. Non-enrolment, passivity, absenteeism, repetition and eventually dropping out are the signs and symptoms of an intricate web of education-related factors that play out in a *process of being and becoming excluded* on an individual and social level. When schools push some children out and fail to draw others in, they are functioning as part of both an education system and a wider social, economic and political context which exclude. It is not sufficient, therefore, to focus at the micro level of the school and forget the politics of its macro environment, or vice versa.

If genuine change is to come about in creating inclusive learning environments for vulnerable and marginalized children, it is critical to keep in mind that *each child as an individual* is at risk and being harmed by exclusionary forces. It is easy to talk about 'the poor', 'street children' or 'girls'. But talking in the aggregate leads to thinking in the abstract and taking little relevant action. Ultimately, it is a specific young girl who is kept

at home to care for siblings, or an adolescent boy from a slum who avoids school because the teacher abuses him. It is insufficient to talk about, analyse and plan on the basis solely of excluded children in the generic.

It is also necessary to talk, analyse and plan *with* the specific children who are being affected: to understand who they are, why they are there, what they are doing and under what circumstances they would be willing to participate in education. All children living in poverty may not be in school for broadly similar reasons. Because of this, macro policies and education systems matter. But the specific conditions under which each child and their family will decide, or be able, to participate, and the actions they take, will be unique. They will depend on the comparative advantage they see in the alternatives, the costs and benefits they perceive and the stress caused to them by lost options.

While self-evident, both the macro and micro perspectives are the reality of exclusion, and complicate significantly any discussion of causes, consequences, who is affected and how to address it. They force consideration of a multiplicity of individual, community and situational factors, and the interactions among them, in trying to understand why exclusion is happening and the interventions needed to reverse it. Macro-level poverty alleviation and better curricula will go some way towards getting children into school; they will not get all children there or help them learn effectively when they are. The following section attempts to untangle some of the strands of the exclusionary knot by considering ways in which it happens at the three *systems* levels – of school, bureaucracy and national policy. The aim is to begin to create a better analytical tool for looking at the dynamics keeping children from effective learning, factors which might then serve as proxy indicators for finding those children and as more precise levers for effecting change.

### **Exclusion at the micro level: the school**

*Schools exclude at the micro level by what they are and what they do – and do not do.* They exclude when they are not learner-friendly, do not support their teachers as professionals and do not welcome families as partners. They exclude by their inability to provide competent and learner-appropriate teaching methods, relevant curriculum materials, or health and safety-promoting facilities. They exclude because they are often places of 'pervasive grimness', overcrowded and dark, with 'little to engage the students' or encourage teachers who, in turn, 'resort to rigid discipline and corporal punishment' or fail to turn up (UNICEF, 1999d, p. 9).

*Schools exclude when they fail to create a culture of peace; when they fail to take affirmative and uncompromising action to end all forms of harassment, abuse and violence.* In and around schools, between teachers and students and among students themselves, psychological and physical threats, abuse and

actual violence are globally becoming matters of serious, sometimes tragic, concern. Girls are especially vulnerable in schools that fail to serve as 'safe havens' from sexual harassment, physical attack or abusive corporal punishment, often by teachers. But boys, too, are at risk. While more often the perpetrators of violence, many come to that role as the victims of earlier abuse.

Schools in remote areas and inner-city slums, those serving communities the least able to demand better, may be unmotivated or unable to apply behaviours which ensure the safety and protection of children. They are often assigned principals and teachers who are not happy to be there, especially if they are from a better-off community outside. Where the community itself is deprived or marginalized, even local staff may be less than effective: poorly trained (those who do have training often leave), largely unsupervised, with few teaching resources. There is little in this to allow or encourage the kind of teaching which creates an inclusive, effective classroom. With few teachers able to use responsive, interactive teaching strategies, these schools are more likely to use power rather than participation as a means of managing behaviour, and less likely to have positive disciplinary alternatives to corporal punishment. Exclusionary factors are interdependent. Where such methods do not actually push children out, they can generate an increasingly dysfunctional school climate leading to antagonistic, abusive or violent responses in some children, or passive resistance and truancy in others. They can also produce burn-out, inertia and abuse on the part of teachers themselves.

*Schools exclude when they apply narrow paradigms of what children are and how they learn; when they are unable to deal with diversity.* Children from 'different cultures, environments, and social classes are exposed to different materials, experiences and informal teaching by their families and neighbours, and this results in the appearance of different competencies at different times' (Hart, n.d., p. 26). Schools which recognize only one kind of intelligence, one notion of what a child of a certain age and characteristics (ability, background, gender) can do, and one way of transferring information, exclude. They fail to recognize, and so to accommodate, what each child brings as learning capacities and interests. These individual characteristics play a significant part in how children 'make the transition to schooling, how they make use of what school offers and how long they stay at school and with what success' (Comber, n.d., p. 3). The professionally weak, narrowly traditional or simply uncaring school risks excluding all children, but especially those from already marginalized backgrounds, by being pedagogically inflexible; by controlling, telling and punishing children rather than understanding them and facilitating their active participation in their own learning.

In this same vein, an inner-city school excludes when, with students from a broad mix of racial, ethnic and language



groups, it allows children from various backgrounds to be overlooked and denies them the potential of shared and mutual learning. Where teachers and curricula are unable to build on the diversity, they leave minority, second-language and culturally different children adrift, neither understanding nor understood. Though from a different cause, many schools in post-colonial countries leave children similarly excluded from their learning environment. As 'islands of foreignness', such schools exclude when they present – and represent – urban, Western or elite values, behaviours and expectations, those with which indigenous, migrant or nomadic children have little in common and from which they have little to gain beyond a sense of failure and confusion.

*Schools exclude when they do not reach out proactively to the families of children who are most vulnerable.* These are the children whose culture or social background, language, customs or sense of self-identity, interfere with their ability to communicate and interact effectively in a traditional classroom. They are children living in poverty who have suffered a history of poor nutrition, limited psychosocial stimulation or emotional and physical trauma. They are children with physical or learning disabilities for whom there has been no support, or children affected by HIV/AIDS. Broadly, these are children whose circumstances have either impeded their ability to learn, or limited the range of positive experiences they have had in engaging with the learning process. They are children who are, therefore, less likely to be resilient and able to adapt successfully to the particular culture (expectations, roles, norms, approved behaviours, etc.) of the school. They are the children most likely to give up or drop out.

Beyond what happens in the classroom itself, *schools exclude these children by not taking their families into account; by not creating programmes expressly to link families into the educational processes their children are experiencing.* Schools foster exclusion, for example, by not instituting parent-teacher association (PTA) or other home/community programmes where parents can openly discuss, in a language they understand, the strengths and weaknesses of their children's learning and behaviour. They exclude by not facilitating, alone or with other agencies, early childhood care and development (ECCD) and parenting programmes, or day-care services to take pressure off working parents who might otherwise need their school-age daughters at home. They fail by not developing cross-cultural learning programmes for children and their families; and by not forming literacy, second-language or vocational training classes for parents who are themselves excluded or vulnerable.

*Schools exclude when they fail to concern themselves with those children who do not turn up.* Schools are often isolated from, and sometimes actively in opposition to, the families and communities whose children they are supposed to be serving. They fail children by not looking for those who are missing,

and by not working with other agencies that might know who and where they are (churches, health centres, drop-in youth clubs). 'Heads of schools and teachers focus their attention on those who are enrolled and seldom work directly with families whose children are out of school . . . local administrators, community leaders . . . even assistant township education officers do not promote and facilitate participation' (Bentzen, n.d., p. 2).

*Schools contribute to exclusion by not putting systems in place for formally noticing and tracking the non-attender or truant:* the child who has not yet officially dropped out, but who is regularly 'just not there'. In some cases, these are children who are not unduly missed because they are seen as poor or disruptive learners. In many cases, it is more simply a problem of no one feeling, or being held, accountable for them. In their broader circle of responsibility, schools exclude when they do not take account of children during their out-of-class hours. Poorly managed shift systems in some African schools, for example, 'leave children idle for much of the day' and open to involvement in street gangs and other forms of violence (*African Contexts . . .*, 1998, Section 3.2.4).

In all of these cases, *exclusion happens to both individuals alone and to individuals as members of groups or categories of children.* A single child may be regularly missing who has to care for HIV-affected parents, has to work, is being bullied at school or is suffering from mental or physical illness. But also a particular *type* of child may be regularly missing – children characterized by their race, gender, place of residence (urban slum) or provenance (hill-tribe community). The first is a problem of uncaring and unprofessional schools; the second a reflection of this same problem exacerbated by systemic discrimination. In either case, 'absence from school is a symptom and not a causal factor' (*Disaffected Children . . .*, 1997, p. 5). To the extent schools do not monitor absenteeism, do not look for and assess patterns and do not work with families and community leaders in understanding the reasons for it, they are helping to create exclusion.

*Schools exclude by costing too much, directly and by implication.* Universal primary education (UPE) notwithstanding, schools are rarely free, or even financially reasonable, for families living at the margin. Costs of schooling can be many and subtle. Over the past decade in rural China, fees have multiplied significantly with the decline in central government subsidies to primary education. In Lijiagou, for example, with female/male enrolment rates of 20% and 40% respectively, school costs over \$7 per five-month semester – 'a huge sum in a region where per capita income is \$50 a year and the payback for literacy seems faraway' (Rosenthal, 1999). Despite the official elimination of tuition, the same is true in Uganda, where the burden is falling especially hard on families affected by HIV/AIDS. Similarly in India, 'the cash costs of education play a major role in discouraging poor families from sending children to school', costing a labourer in Bihar, for example,

forty days of labour per year to send three children to the 'free' primary school (PROBE, 1999, p. 16). Timing of expenditures can also be a problem. Parents on subsistence incomes cannot always produce the immediate lump-sum payment that their child's school calls for.

There are also the hidden or imputed costs. In Indian communities where higher dowries are charged for educated girls, there is 'a clear disincentive to parents' to pay for daughters to go to school (PROBE, 1999, p. 31). In very poor rural families, any child at all going to school requires 'an exacting struggle'. Even where the miscellaneous charges are objectively small, '... cruel choices may have to be made between schooling and other opportunities. Sending a child to school may mean less money to buy seeds or medicine, more back-breaking work for her mother at home or fewer resources for another child's education'. In situations of high infant mortality, a mother who has to ask if she should 'worry about the survival of my children, or their schooling', makes it clear that education may not always be the expenditure of choice for parents (PROBE, 1999, pp. 35, 33).

Families are forced to assess their situation, balance priorities and manage shifts of income and expenditure with very little room to manoeuvre. Even where they are prepared to make the effort to pay, they are less likely to come down on the side of education when the school experience is negative, learning is minimal and future benefits uncertain or unlikely. Reflecting the cycle of exclusion, the difficulties families face in financing their children's school attendance are leading to a situation of 'stuttering education' (Rosenthal, 1999). This is a problem for the child who makes little progress over an extended period, and for the school that finds itself dealing with classrooms full of children of many ages who come and go as finances at home permit.

*Schools, and their teachers, exclude by not being sufficiently accountable to their students and parents.* PROBE's analysis of four poverty-burdened states in India found that 'the deterioration of [their] teaching standards has gone much too far to be explained by the disempowerment [of teachers] factor alone' (PROBE, 1999, p. 63). Though the specifics may not be generalizable to all situations of exclusion, the generic issues are probably fairly common. 'Plain negligence', for example, must explain teachers keeping a school locked for months, their drunkenness, asking children to do their domestic chores, or their seeking work elsewhere. All these factors, however, may be 'less devastating than the quiet inertia of the majority of teachers [which] has become a way of life in the profession'. These are situations where teachers simply do nothing, leaving children to play or go home. Without accountability mechanisms, managed by school leaders and teacher groups in collaboration with the community, there is little 'to protect the work culture of the teaching profession' and little to mobilize and guide teachers to help them to do better (PROBE, 1999, p. 64).

### **Exclusion at the meso level: the education bureaucracy**

*The education bureaucracy excludes* by failing to recognize the diversity of learners within its purview. It excludes when, in consequence, it fails to provide the education programmes and schools under its responsibility with the human and financial resources and discretionary authority they, in turn, need to support, build on and strengthen that diversity. As primary interpreter and implementer of national education policy, and venue of a country's core educational expertise and power, it is largely at this meso level where systems-based factors excluding children are officially created and operationally sustained.

The bureaucracy excludes by producing incapable teachers and irrelevant curricula. It excludes by ignoring or dismissing alternative education delivery channels and methods, especially non-formal education (NFE), as legitimate and necessary modalities for reaching hard-to-reach children. It excludes by allowing and not actively combating the kind of 'educational triage' which supports high-quality learning opportunities for the few, mediocre programmes for the general society, and poor or no facilities for the rest (Lieberman and Miller, 1999, p. 8). It excludes by not creating and enforcing policies of transparency, accountability and 'no tolerance' for any kind of corruption, at any level.

*The education bureaucracy excludes children when it fails to provide their teachers with the learning and professional status they need to be effectively competent, responsible and motivated.* In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 35% of teachers are considered underqualified, with an even higher figure in the poorer provinces (UNESCOa, 1999., p. 12). Teacher education in Pakistan has remained apparently unchanged since a 1988 review found that such 'a variety of authorities control different aspects of the system' that, in effect, 'no agency in particular is in charge . . . no single body or institution is accountable for progress in teacher education [or] for quality control and development' (*Putting the Child First . . .*, 1998, p. 13). Research on classrooms in Namibia paints a sobering picture of poorly trained teachers. Hardly dramatic, but none the less clear, there is very little reason for children to go to school or engage in learning when the little that their teachers are doing is nevertheless 'the best they can do'. When 'choral repetition is the primary method of teaching in the languages, and even in maths in some cases [and], in the majority of cases, it was clear that the learners were not reading, but were just looking at the teacher and repeating', children are being excluded (Fair, 1994, p. 42).

*Education systems exclude when they fail to provide teachers with regular in-service professional training and moral support, through learning-oriented supervisors.* Failure to support teachers inside the classroom, especially those in marginal, poor or isolated schools, excludes students by giving them teachers with typically no or little pre-service training, often coming into the system as teacher aids – little more than childminders – to

flounder and fail. Even where they are trained, the unsupervised teacher excludes when confronted with a significant culture gap between what was expected and what those children from ethnically or resource-poor communities are able to do. In any event, no pre-service training can prepare teachers for all they will find in the classroom, especially where the school environment has few materials and children come to school malnourished, abused, having experienced little intellectual stimulation, or reflecting a different language or culture base.

Also, teachers burn out. Especially in circumstances where they are under-prepared, where students are reluctant learners, and where families can focus simply on the day's next meal, teachers can and do fall into patterns of inaction or absenteeism. Working in a 'demotivating environment which saps their morale day after day' and where 'there is a deep lack of accountability in the schooling system' (PROBE, 1999, p. 55), education systems most seriously exclude by diminishing the value of teaching and of its teachers. Their message says, in effect, 'conscientious teaching is the least prominent and most thankless of the activities they can be expected to perform' (PROBE, 1999, pp. 58–62).

Without a regular connection to new ideas and knowledge, and the chance to regenerate their sense of curiosity about teaching and learning, teachers are less likely to be creative in their interaction with children. There will be less to motivate them to consider individual learner capacities, to attend to their varying needs for protection or to the development of the whole child. They are less likely to take the risk or make the effort of moving beyond transferring knowledge, to teach in ways which engage learners, to guide the development of critical thinking or promote problem-solving. They are less likely to have the professional confidence or ability to reach out to parents concerning their children's strengths and problems as learners. All this makes it especially difficult for teachers to interact effectively with children who are emotionally or physically vulnerable or culturally and linguistically different.

*Education bureaucracies exclude by being 'predicated on the achievement of the "successful", rather than on an inclusive education'<sup>1</sup> which aims to improve the problem-solving and critical learning skills of all pupils and not just a select few'* (Vargas-Baron and Hartwell, 1999, p. 51). A narrowly focused achievement-oriented paradigm defines some children out, and defines them out with greater regularity when they are poor, marginal or in some way out of the norm. Testing procedures exclude when they act solely on a summative basis to screen

1. The term 'inclusive' is used throughout this text to define a philosophy of/approach to education, and to a quality of school, which are in active, purposive opposition to exclusion. In this, 'inclusive education' is meant in its popular sense, but reinforced by the international commitment to education made at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education which 'recognizes diversity and caters for *all* learners' irrespective of the particular intellectual, physical, emotional, sociocultural or experiential 'conditions' they bring with them to the learning process (*Salamanca Statement . . .*, 1994).

out, or keep back, children who fail to meet certain criteria, rather than formatively to 'support their continuous progress' (UNESCO/ICF-EFA, 1998b, p. 16). When education systems manage by the bell curve, assume that certain children cannot learn, or maintain classrooms which do not integrate the child who is linguistically different, they not only put the validity of their assessments at risk. They also act directly to exclude those children whose learning capacities and needs the tests fail to recognize or to 'count'.

Children already at risk are made more vulnerable to exclusion when the system's assessment procedures fail to reflect the individual learning characteristics, gender or home background of each child and to accommodate itself to them. Assessment excludes when it forces adaptations by the child rather than by the system, especially when that child does not automatically or easily 'fit in'. There is little evidence to show that children who repeat learn any more or any better through re-exposure to the same content and teaching methods, especially when there is no remedial support for filling in learning gaps. On the contrary, the family, health, psychosocial and development factors which negatively affected the ability to succeed in the first place are likely to be exacerbated for a child who may be punished by parents for failing, or punished by the fact of now being older than classmates, probably bored and labelled with the stigma of failure. Ironically, the continued presence of such a child in the same limited class space may widen the circle of exclusion further by keeping a younger one from moving up.

*The education bureaucracy excludes children when it persists in creating inappropriate and irrelevant curricula and materials of poor pedagogical quality.* Curricula which are gender-biased and degrading, which are incomprehensible to specific groups of children, or which do not allow any local adaptation, force children away. An education system which causes 'alienation of the individual from the culture and community of origin', drawing children away from traditional forms, contents and philosophies of learning, excludes (Serpell, 1996). African educators talk of their not yet decolonized systems 'divorcing children from their roots'. But the problem is not just in the South. In one region of the north-west United States, for example, although the majority of students were from Hispanic, Indian and other cultures, the schools continued to present 'a culture based on the white, Anglo-Saxon culture. Although students seemed gifted in their drawing abilities, the entry tests were based solely on understanding print-based concepts' with which they had more limited experience (Cooney, 1995).

*Education systems and their curricula and methods exclude when, in their wake, schools produce national assessment results that essentially relegate whole segments of children to the status of failures.* They exclude by forcing a conclusion that 'very few children [in a given population] attained mastery in any subject. . . . [That while] they did better on subjects requiring rote memory, [they did] poorly on basic literacy skills such as reading with comprehension and writing a letter and lacked

knowledge of health and hygiene principles and general knowledge' (*Putting the Child First . . .*, 1998, p. 10). These children are excluded by a system which not only does not let them learn, but then forces on them the lasting stereotype and implications of being 'failures'.

### **Exclusion at the macro level: national education policy**

*Government and education policies exclude* in two broad ways. *By commission*, they actively deny children's right to education through the regulations they apply – restrictive enrolment criteria, segregating children with disabilities, denying NFE an effective co-ordination with the formal system. They also exclude *by omission* – failing to make 'education for all' a broad societal philosophy and articulated priority or to implement any pro-child policies which do exist in serious, systematic ways.

Numbers count. Policies at the macro level can cause exclusion so extensive as to be considered a national phenomenon. Burma, with an estimated 25% of its children never enrolling in school, and of those who do only about 34% completing the first cycle (Bentzen, n.d., p. 1), Pakistan, with an estimated 44% of children in primary school (*Putting the Child First . . .*, 1998, p. 5), and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with a drop-out rate of 60% and an average attendance of about three years (UNESCOa, 1999, p. 11) must be seen as *countries of exclusion*.

Policies are also selective in impact, affecting specifically marginalized communities in large or smaller *pockets of exclusion*. Rajasthan, for example, a state of India with a large nomadic, scheduled caste and tribal population, is one among ten states with literacy rates well below the 52% national level, and with primary-school completion rates even lower (Govinda, n.d., p. 1). Exclusionary policies, or policy inaction, also affect generalized and scattered classes of children such as the 'urban poor'. In East St Louis, Illinois, for example, '... some 70% of the students fail to meet state standards; 52% drop out of high school. Sixth graders have been known to teach classes due to teacher absenteeism' (Cohen, 1999, C-1).

*National government and education policy-making bodies exclude by not seriously or comprehensively identifying barriers to education for families and children at risk; by not creating opportunities to allow their participation.* Ethnic minorities, forced migrants and refugees, nomadic children, girls as a class in many cultures, are all communities where children vulnerable to exclusion are found, and for whom the failure of macro policy to be proactive in support of their education is exclusionary. National education bodies exclude when they locate schools far from ethnic or poor communities, for example. They exclude when they fail to urge colleagues in ministries of transport, industry or rural development to consider isolated, impoverished communities and education access and quality in making their decisions on road, rail or

communication networks, on industrial expansion or support to small and medium-sized enterprise development. They exclude by not calling health and social development ministries to account for families with inadequate nutrition, disease-prevention interventions or HIV/AIDS counselling services. Education ministers exclude by failing to emphasize on the policy agenda that *all sectors* are obligated under the CRC to ensure education for all children, and therefore that considerable resources need to be equitably and efficiently allocated to that end.

*National systems exclude when they purposely segregate children with special learning needs.* They exclude when they determine that a child's persistent failures or problems in school arise, not from the nature of the teaching or the environment of the school, but from deficiencies in the child. They exclude when they 'deflect attention from the more general changes in curricula and teaching methods that might minimize the creation of difficulties for learners' (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3) and put the onus instead on the child and family to act – often by withdrawing the child from the system. Children are further excluded when the system does not provide them schools and teachers with the knowledge, skills and resources to diagnose and 'scaffold' them, i.e. to give them the level and kind of support which will facilitate their learning.

These children are excluded when they are ignored in the classroom, left to try to survive on their own. They have often little option but to drop out. They are excluded when their ability to explore, test and adapt is removed by placements in restrictive remedial classes. They are excluded by being removed to institutions without professional competence. Systems exclude when they discriminate 'behind an apparently benign' labelling of children as different and effectively unteachable. Macro policies exclude when 'learners are expected to aspire to a single standard of culture or educational fitness and those who cannot shed their difference are seen as having an enhanced distinctiveness and may be subject to increasing rejection' (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3).

*Macro levels exclude by failing systematically to assess variation in learning achievement across the country, or to seek patterns of factors causing them.* As noted above, student assessments can exclude. National-level policy excludes by not knowing precisely what is being assessed and the quality of the results; not knowing the validity and reliability of the instruments or how they are administered.

Children can be unfairly put out of a programme or denied progress to the next level by standardized tests which do not account for differences in linguistic or cultural background, or in school quality. Systemic exclusion is missed when certain groups of students are not regularly enough at school to take a test or pass it. Improvements in classroom-level test scores at higher grades may mean better-quality teaching and curriculum. They may also mean that weaker, culturally less

well-integrated students, have dropped out. Exclusion is created at the macro level when policy-makers and evaluators are unclear, inconsistent and ineffective in ensuring accurate and well-implemented assessments; and when they fail to interpret results in ways that reveal where children with persistently low achievement and non-participation are (i.e. those for whom education is not proving effective) and the contextual and school factors associated with that exclusion.

*Education policies exclude when they segregate the formal 'legitimate' school system from the less-worthy 'rest'.* Education policies which accredit for academic advancement and social recognition only one learning channel and which designate non-formal alternatives as second-class and merely for subsistence, exclude almost all children living at the social and economic margins. They create chronic exclusion when they fail to enable and recognize the creation of an *integrated learning system*, one in which a wide range of education modalities is given status, and the resources to go with that.

Policies foster exclusion by not working in collaboration with the non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and indigenous institutions which are well-placed to deliver these other modalities, promoting instead dysfunctional competition for funds, duplication of services, inequities in educational quality and irregularity of access. Through programmes they support themselves, and those they fund others to deliver, education systems exclude when they act on the assumption that second-class is good enough; that the education deficit faced by children who are working, marginalized and living in poverty can be made up by programmes which are under-resourced, inadequately staffed, often non-functional and, in all of this, equally marginal.

*Macro policies exclude by insisting on centralized and inflexible control over standards, approaches and methods that are not relevant to vulnerable communities.* The brief excerpt below describing the situation of Tanzanian children and their absence from school illustrates well the idea that EFA goals perhaps fail less often in the dramatic than in the mundane. Exclusion is essentially a matter of education systems focusing on their own priorities rather than accommodating and adapting to the real lives of children:

... children stated they could not come to school because of work at home, some of which, for both boys and girls, was caring for younger siblings, but most of which (70% for boys and 65% for girls) was to 'guard the farm'. ... [In] savannah cultivation the crops are under constant threat. At seed time, birds and monkeys eat the seeds; during the period when the crops are growing, monkeys, baboons and pigs may raid the crops and an entire year's harvest can be lost in a single night. Thus all family members are needed to protect the crop, and children are kept away from school particularly at those periods when crops are at greatest risk. ... [In] a second area ... subject to flooding, [the] government solution had been to move people to the higher ground and create villages where none had been before,

including schools and dispensaries. Yet, after the end of the Nyerere period of government, villagers moved back to lowland areas and became transhumant in order to cope with the seasonal periods of flooding. As schools were only available in the new villages on higher ground, children were absent from school on a seasonal basis, with attendance varying between 40% and 85% (*African Contexts ...*, 1998, Section 3.2.1).

*Undifferentiated, nationally set education policies exclude when they act independently of communities to enforce a national (often international) language of instruction.* In many countries, this produces a 'schooling that cuts the young child off from the home language [and] is a major cause of drop-out and repetition' (UNESCO/ICF-EFA, 1998b, p. 27). An estimated 90% of people living in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, do not understand the colonial language used as the medium of formal school learning (Kuper, W., 1999, p. 73). Macro policy, supported by some donors, which insists on the use of such languages, excludes significant numbers of children both from effective learning and success on nationally set primary-leaving examinations. This issue is not straightforward, of course. Policies also risk excluding children by limiting them to local languages that are given no status or credit beyond the community, thus preventing them from engaging with, and moving into, the wider world. 'It is not in the best interests of the child to grow up in isolation from the language, culture and society of the majority population of the country' (UNICEF, 1998a, p. 55).

National systems fail on both counts where they make the decisions from the centre; when they do not collaborate with families to negotiate approaches based on local priorities, sound pedagogical experience and a range of options. Current wisdom suggests use of the first language in early years, adding others later. An equally well-articulated position suggests that national governments in regions such as Africa need, together, to rethink their language policies and to co-operate in support of local languages whose populations cut across their national boundaries. Both positions have a certain logic. Both require solid research and evaluation, well-prepared teachers and materials, and mobilized national support for whichever strategy is adopted. National systems exclude in rarely making the effort on behalf of, or providing such resources to, the hard-to-reach.

### **Socio-economic and political conditions**

The major danger is that of a gulf opening up between a minority of people who are capable of finding their way successfully about this new world that is coming into being and the majority who feel that they are at the mercy of events and have no say in the future of society. ... Education, by providing access to knowledge for all, has precisely this universal task of helping people to understand the world and to understand others (UNESCO, 1996, p. 34).

Exclusion is about the 'majority who have no say', and about the failure of societies to provide the education which gives them the opportunity to change that situation. It is created by social, economic and political environments that diminish and destroy the power of families to act on behalf of their children's education, or of children and young people to act for themselves. Globally and nationally, societies are creating excluded children by allowing the emergence of a 'two-tier global order . . . characterized by growing economic polarization and social exclusion' (UNICEF, 1998b, Para. 19).

The preceding discussion of how education systems exclude children potentially concerns all children to some degree. The concern of this paper, and critical for the focus of global action in support of education during the next fifteen years, however, are those children who are *affected in a major way* by exclusionary forces. They are children, chiefly (though not solely) in developing countries, *living in conditions of extreme poverty and social marginalization*. They are children who, whether on their own or through their families, are *unlikely to break the exclusionary downward cycle*. They are, therefore, the children *for whom national systems and the international community must take significant affirmative and persistent action both* to change the basic conditions of poverty and exclusion in their lives overall, *and* to design and implement inclusive, effective education. More specifically, excluded children are those who

- *are not considered to 'fit' into majority-based classrooms*: ethnic minority and scheduled caste children; children of different cultures, speaking other than a national language; or whose dysfunctional or broken family or life on the street lead them to be stereotyped as children incapable or unworthy of learning and appropriately kept out of school.
- *contradict accepted norms of who can or should learn*: girls in general and pregnant girls in particular; children with disabilities or affected by HIV/AIDS.
- *cannot afford the cost or the time of schooling*: children from chronically poor urban and rural families or for whom economic crises have created newly jobless families; working and street children; children who are the fall-out of structural adjustment programmes.
- *are not free or available to participate*: geographically isolated children in coastal fishing communities or remote mountain areas; child soldiers; unregistered migrants; children of transients, seasonal workers and nomadic communities.
- *are living in the context of disaster*: children in war, refugee children and children displaced by destruction of their physical environment.

The following discussion elaborates some of these circumstances, towards creating a more operational picture of what exclusion looks like. Somewhat arbitrarily, these have been grouped according to *who* the children are, *where* they are (i.e. the circumstances in which they find themselves), and *what*

they are doing. These categories are not mutually exclusive. The excluded child is, for example, a girl working as a flower seller on the street of an impoverished Brazilian slum; an adolescent boy from a hill-tribe community forced to serve in one of the drug militias of the Golden Triangle.

The differentiation into the who, where and what of exclusion is intended to provide perspective; to make the concept more *accessible* and *actionable* in terms of determining specific focus, constraints and entry points for intervention. In other words, if the conditions of exclusion exist, the existence of excluded children *must* be assumed.

*Who* these children are concerns those characteristics that are effectively 'given', the *essence* of the child: gender, ethnicity and race; age (for that period); basic intellectual and physical capacities; background experience and personal history. These are the bases which cannot be changed and on which the child *must* be accepted as a learner. They are the bases around which the society, education system and school must organize to ensure a relevant and effective learning experience. These characteristics cannot be used as justification for exclusion.

*Where* concerns the context in which the child lives, or has been placed. It concerns the *surrounding conditions* which exclude children by failing to allow for their (and their families') basic rights and needs, including access to good education. The 'where' shifts the focus from the child who is struggling to those responsible for ensuring the protection and development of this and all children, pursuant to the commitments of the CRC – no matter where he or she is. The right to a good education of a child living on the street is no less than that of a child living in luxury; the obligation of a society to ensure such a child gets that education is as firm. The 'where' forces consideration not of how the child must change to fit into school, but of how the barriers presented by the school and the wider socio-economic, cultural and political environment can be removed, or their negative impacts mitigated, so as to ensure that the child does indeed 'fit'.

*What* concerns both the who and where of exclusion. It concerns how the child, *based on his or her individual and social resources and personal interests*, is managing or coping with the conditions of life. It includes consideration of how ready the child is to engage in learning and/or to participate in education, given the other activities and concerns he or she faces. The focus here is on collaboration with the child concerned. It involves those responsible for the child's well-being, and how they can most effectively know, and co-operate with, that child to design and implement action appropriate to ensuring effective and relevant education (as well as health care, social services, justice, etc.). A perspective on what the excluded child is doing forces situation analyses and interventions to be more refined and tailored; to consider, for example, what working children are working at and where, with what risk and how much 'space' they have for learning. It forces interventions to

consider specifically what a child is doing on the street, in a conflict zone or in an isolated rural school. It forces consideration of how education can be made to suit each child as they are now, and to help them move forward.

### Who the excluded children are

*They are girls.* Globally, under all categories, **the children most frequently excluded are girls.** Gender continues to be the major causal factor in children being left out, and pushed out, of school. The denial of a girl's right to education remains a pernicious and persistent characteristic of many societies on a purposive basis, for reasons of culture and family choice. Beliefs that the formal education of girls is inappropriate or unnecessary, and failures to make schools safe, secure and empowering places for girls, continue to create systemic gender bias in who goes to school and successfully completes a basic education. Girls are excluded by cultures insisting on early marriage and preparing for that role by young years focused on domestic chores, caring for siblings and protecting virtue. They are excluded when, due to pregnancy, they are forced to drop out of school and rarely given support by either home or school to return.

The figures are well known but none the less dramatic: approximately two-thirds of the 130 million primary-school-age children not in school are girls. In Africa, almost 26 million girls are out of school. In Afghanistan, under the Taliban, net primary attendance is only 36% for boys, but a tragic 11% for girls; while 47% men are literate, only 15% of women are. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, of the 64% of adults who are literate, only 35% are girls and women. In Yemen, girls' participation is only about 31%, some 42 points behind that of boys.

*They are the especially vulnerable.* Children limited in realizing their full potential for learning by being denied access to a good quality education are also **children who are physically, intellectually or emotionally vulnerable.** This includes children who have been put at risk by the inadequate pre- and post-natal care available to their mothers, by their own nutritional deficit or by an early home environment that failed to nurture or stimulate them. The 120,000 children who survived iodine-deficiency disorder in 1990 and are now afflicted with cretinism; the 250,000 who survived vitamin A deficiency and are now blind; and the thousands who are maimed annually by landmines, are all children whose right to learn and be educated to their full potential has been put at risk (WHO, 1996, p. 1).

Children are also systematically excluded in many cases on the basis of what the society and school define as *disability*. Like much else about exclusion, beliefs and actions around disability cause a great deal of suffering, but few clear answers. Of an assumed 10% of children in a population with some form of disability, it is estimated that as few as 3% of those in developing countries have access to rehabilitation services

(Farzanegan, 1998, p. 14). Globally, it is the tragedy of these children that along with the special efforts they themselves have to make in order to participate, they have to deal with education systems which define them out by failing to apply a framework which creates environments better suited to all learners (UNESCO/ICF-EFA, 1998a, p. 4).

Children are excluded where no provision is made to support them when physical, emotional or intellectual difficulties interfere with their learning. It is estimated that only 1% of such children are in school (UNICEF, 1999d, p. 32). In more-industrialized countries, where they do often have access to school, the participation of these children may still be marginal. The poor pedagogical training of teachers can limit both the effective management of the particular learning needs of these children and their integration into the social relationships of the class. Elsewhere, these problems are exacerbated by an overall lack of resources, child-accessible facilities and expertise. Most insidiously, perhaps, these children are excluded by being rendered statistically invisible: not included among the potential total school-going population and, therefore, not missed when they do not turn up (UNESCO, 1998).

In near-crisis proportions for some countries and new since Jomtien, the answer to the question of who is being excluded is *children affected by HIV/AIDS*. Clearly traumatic for children in terms of their health, HIV/AIDS is also having tragic impacts on their right to be protected by and participate in their society, and on their ability to protect and manage themselves. One of the enduring traumas for affected children is that the discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS can put certain of their rights (of access to care and learning) at jeopardy of others (their right to confidentiality).

Children are also being negatively affected when their parents and other family members are infected and die. AIDS has created over 8.2 million orphans between the critical school ages of 6 and 12), a figure that is expected to reach 40 million by 2010 (UNFPA, 1998, p. 18). HIV/AIDS is thus creating children who are suddenly responsible not only for their own protection and care, but also that of younger siblings and other infected relatives, and with few human or financial resources to bring to bear in doing so. With an HIV/AIDS affected family typically comes a downward spiral of exclusions: economic problems, leading to inability to pay school fees and dropping out; food insecurity and difficulties with other basic needs; sometimes loss of land and possessions to relatives, and a move into the street where vulnerabilities increase exponentially (Farzanegan, 1998, p. 13).

Children's ability to access services, and the quality of those services, are most certainly being affected. This includes limiting their ability to go to, and stay in, school and the ability of schools to ensure that the teachers will be there when the children do come. In Zambia, 680 teachers were reported to have died of AIDS-related illnesses in 1996, 624 the following

year and 200 in the first few months of 1998, 'figures [which] translate into more than 2.1% of trained teachers or almost two per day' (Kelly, 1999, p. 27). Monitoring the progress and impact of the epidemic on different groups of children at risk and on their learning is fundamental to ensuring appropriate action on their behalf. As education systems fail, however, any mitigating influences for children in terms of the nurturing, knowledge, skills and protection that might come from education are being even further reduced.

*They are minorities and indigenous.* Children excluded from education are frequently the children of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups. These two types of community are often distinguished in terms of the intensity, persistence and scope of their exclusion from mainstream societies. Common to them in terms of their children's education, however, is the serious risk that many are facing from schools which fail both to treat children equitably as learners and to respect their cultures as valid systems of knowledge and values. For both indigenous communities and long-standing ethnic minorities, the fact of exclusion is real, and it is serious. In 1994, 70% of Peru's Quechua-speaking people over 5 years of age had not been to school; in Guatemala, 80% of the rural indigenous population was illiterate (World Bank, 1995, p. 45). In China's Qinghai Province, an area of nomadic herders, attendance at the secondary level has dropped more than 66% over the last decade, largely as a result of rising school costs and fewer jobs, making these costs less tenable (Rosenthal, 1999). These are not rare instances.

The questions for education concern the nature and impact of this isolation on quality of life, and how the situation should be addressed to ensure effective learning and equity. The questions go beyond issues of poverty and marginalization. They include how the rights of these children and communities will be preserved, and their best interests ensured, when their very history, culture and language serve both to exclude them and to put them at risk of never being able to achieve 'inclusion'. In most cases there is no reasonable possibility of these communities remaining outside the mainstream. Without the dignity of any choice, however, education systems are excluding these families and their children by leaving them to handle the balancing of sociocultural integration, assimilation and disintegration as best they can.

Many of these children will not go to school; most who do go, will not stay. The Karimojong of Uganda provide a cogent example. A semi-nomadic people in a 'highly fragile and precarious ecological environment', the formal primary school

... has failed to provide ... children with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills relevant to their roles and livelihood ... which neither equips them to become productive members of their society nor prepares them to take up meaningful life outside [it] undermines their values, traditional knowledge and skills, cultural traits and form of education which are crucial to survival. The curriculum is generally

irrelevant [does] not stress preparation for self-reliance, (a) positive image of pastoralism [or the] emergence of traditional and modern pastoral cultures which would enhance the economic contribution of pastoralism to the national economy. ... The formal primary-school education continues to threaten social ethics ... and has rigid instructional methodology. On top of all this, it is also expensive and requires full-time attendance unsuited to a nomadic culture (*Basic Education Programme* ... , 1997, Section 2.3).

Indigenous and ethnic-minority children are continuing to be excluded because partnerships and negotiations between the community and externally oriented schools are not sufficiently effective or open. Creativity and flexibility in curriculum choices, appropriate balancing around language of instruction and use of traditional versus child-oriented teaching styles, are not common. While a community such as the Karimojong is able to bring considerable strengths to any serious effort seeking its participation, it is rarely invited to do so. The tragedy of these communities and their children is that so many interventions assume that they have nothing on which to build, nothing to contribute to the analysis of problems or to the development of alternatives. The tragedy of education systems in dealing with these communities is that so few provide the professional competency, motivation and material resources necessary to allow such participation.

*They are adolescents.* Cutting across all categories of excluded children is the situation of those who are, in fact, no longer really children. Except for those who get into trouble of some kind, capacity, knowledge and life-style issues of concern to *young people in that period of transition called adolescence* (usually between 11 and 18 years) have not tended to be specifically addressed in much of the EFA discussion. The situation is changing as young people of this age are increasingly recognized as being particularly vulnerable and at risk. Maternal mortality and morbidity are higher for girls under 20; violence, delinquency and substance abuse are on the rise in this age group; 65% of the reported cases of HIV/AIDS in Thailand are here (Phitsanuloke AIDS Intervention ... , 1997). Most child-soldiers, labouring children and those who are sexually exploited are here (UNICEF, 1997b, pp. 15, 16, 37). In many African countries, over 50% of the population is under the age of 18, but youth is 'an excluded category in terms of policies, services and participation'. (*African Contexts* ... , 1998, Section 2). Adolescents are becoming a larger proportion of prison and detention centres populations, and are often those same ones who have not completed school and, while inside, remain without access to regular or good quality education programmes (UNICEF/Brazil, 1999; Tressou, 1997).

Adolescence is a period of life with a special need for 'supportive caring relationships, ... to feel respected and appreciated, to have a sense of belonging and membership ...' in families and communities which can help young people to develop the 'inner strengths' and resilience for effectively managing themselves and acting on their environments



(UNICEF, 1997b, p. 9). Unfortunately, although these are still children for whose learning families, schools and the wider community are responsible, they are the ones very often denied support. Teachers and parents frequently do not recognize the nature of the changes they are going through, treating their confusion and testing behaviours as undisciplined, aberrant and hostile. Schools that supply little beyond custodial management and rote teaching methods are ill-prepared to provide supportive, flexible learning environments for youth struggling with the demands of an adult world. They are excluding and opening up these children to risk by failing to provide them with protection from, and opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge about, the dilemmas and threats of HIV/AIDS, drug use, early pregnancies, exploitative relationships; or how to meet the challenges of an unknown future.

As a result, these young people are becoming increasingly disaffected and discouraged, angry and sometimes hopeless. In all societies, more are coming to see themselves as not only without a sense of security and personal worth now, but as potentially without a better future. In Western countries, violence in schools and among street gangs is growing along with dropping out of school, home and community. Homelessness is becoming a permanent condition of their lives rather than a passing teenage phase. In developing countries, whole communities of youth are living in and with marginality as their life condition. Some of UNESCO's efforts to give these people a voice are producing not only a platform for them, but a window for the adult world on how serious the situation is becoming. 'But really young guy, you won't go to school. Of course not, you're too poor! Your father and your mother, they have no time; they're too busy surviving [sic] for more. Days come and go until sudden death. Your life is as hard as stone, don't forget you're raw to the bone' (Rabba Boyz, 1997).

### Where excluded children are found

*In situations of poverty.* The vast majority of children excluded from their right to education are those living in conditions of absolute poverty. Poverty is the most persistent and inexorable of all exclusionary factors. Because of this, it is also the least dramatic and the least likely to mobilize action. The fact that whole communities of children and parents are not participating in education is a reality often unseen except in annexes of international reports. *Exclusion by neglect* becomes an inter-generational, effectively natural, condition for families who come to assume irregular, inadequate and dysfunctional schooling and for societies which ignore them.

Absolute poverty is also universal. In both developed and developing countries, in both rural and urban areas, it exists. On a national level, it is reflected in governments not having the resources or the willingness to meet their social development obligations, including provision of functional education systems with competent teachers and enough schools. On a more human level, it is an all-inclusive condition of families not

being able to meet their basic needs of survival, health and development. Poverty affects every dimension of a family's life and the lives of its children. In particular, it diminishes their individual and collective sense of control over immediate and long-term options, making education a less-compelling value. Poverty at this level is about having few real choices and limited flexibility. From a national socio-political perspective, absolute poverty among the population is sometimes a happenstance. More typically, it is a matter of persistently failed public policy, corruption and civil or environmental trauma.

Children are excluded by poverty in countries where policies of national and local governments create and exacerbate it by cutting social expenditures in response to structural adjustment programmes, subsidizing an urban middle class, building up the armed forces or large-scale infrastructures, or sustaining corruption. All of these deny large numbers of children adequate schools, trained teachers and good curricula. They are excluded in countries or provinces where policies, by action or default, distribute resources, power and access to information inequitably and sometimes not at all. They are excluded in families and communities without the qualities of health, income security or sense of a 'future benefit' that might incline them to send their children to school – even to pay the fees, were good schools available.

Absolute poverty exists in countries where it should not exist. A growing body of US-based research on children having problems in school or dropping out points to chronic poverty, often confounded by race, as the common factor. Families in both rural and urban poverty tend to have more children with special needs; they certainly have fewer resources to address those needs, or the psychological margin, social support and self-confidence to collaborate in affirmative action with schools. Research on the state of urban education in developed countries indicates that poverty significantly reduces the likelihood of communities 'bucking' the trends of low attendance and achievement, patchy standards and drop-outs. In Canada, with 20% to 25% of children considered to be living in poverty, the effects on their education are clear: poor performance, chronic stress and adjustment problems, conflicts at home and school, feelings of rage and despair and, especially among Native American communities, teenage suicide.

*In situations of traumatic change.* Children already made vulnerable to exclusion by living in poverty are pushed even further into crisis by being in situations of **severe economic decline and traumatic changes in socio-economic governance systems**. In times of such stress, already-fragile education systems push marginal children out with special harshness, usually without clear or committed strategies for protecting the gains they have made or for bringing them back. Some of the countries in South-East Asia have served as an important object lesson in recent years in how quickly this can happen. In Indonesia, entire cohorts risk being lost as children are forced to drop out of the system and do not come back. Even where

some are financially able to return, and want to, schools are likely to have trouble accommodating them where classes will be full and many children over-age for their level. It is a condition becoming critically worse as the social dislocations of ethnic conflict begin to take hold.

The countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States present another version of a near-systemic exclusion of children created through abrupt economic reversal and political change. In this case, the dramatic recasting of the socio-economic paradigm of these countries has changed equally fundamentally the nature of the education system and families' relationship to it. Children are being excluded as the costs and benefits of participation lose their previous equilibrium. In a situation of 'major educational meltdown', more than 32,000 Russian pre-schools have closed, contributing to a decline of close to 20% of children in kindergarten (UNICEF, 1999a, p. 1). Fees for schooling have risen significantly. State support for teachers' salaries and training, for curriculum materials, for school meals and medical care, for subsidized clothing and other incentives have all fallen or been eliminated. Most at risk, of course, are the already vulnerable: children from the poorest, chiefly rural, families, ethnic minorities, children with disabilities (UNICEF, 1998a). A new and very large generation of excluded children and adults is being created as stratification in access is denying 'equal education to the poorest and most marginalized children' (UNICEF, 1998a, p. 2).

*In situations of structural adjustment and debt.* Excluded children are also to be found where international agencies and national governments have insisted on the strict application of **structural adjustment or debt repayment regimes**. They are excluded further where these interventions are applied without sufficient consideration of their implications for vulnerable groups, and are not monitored for their impact on these groups. Impacts have certainly been felt, especially in Africa. Painting a quite graphic description of broad-brush, systemic, exclusion from the perspective of Senegal, for example:

Many families [were] plunged into relative or absolute poverty and children of poor families paid the heaviest price: . . . between 2,000 and 3,000 children live in the streets. Around 100,000 children beg in the streets. Worse than that, the number of child beggars increases from year to year. In 1997 there were 6,300 children begging in the streets of Dakar, compared to 1,000 in 1991 . . . more than 60% of these children are between 7 and 12 . . . 33% suffer from malnutrition in rural areas, and 22.4% in urban areas. If these children fall sick they have no access to either curative or preventative medicine (*African Contexts . . .*, Section 3.2.1).

Reconfirming the 'close, and incontrovertible, relationship between poverty, health and education', the crisis has had an impact on survival strategies of Senegalese families. According to a World Bank report, 70% of the income of poor families is spent on food, while only 2% is dedicated to education. The

state budget for education is considered 'insufficient in view of population growth and educational demand, and [even] those children who go to school find themselves in crowded classrooms in which quality teaching is impossible' (World Bank, 1995).

*On the street.* Children living with poverty and other conditions putting them at risk are increasingly to be found as **children on the street**: as beggars, scrap pickers, street sellers, prostitutes, petty thieves. This categorization is complicated by the fact that these children are not a single 'type', the label being based on where donors and society find them rather than who they are or what they are doing. While many do live on the street, alone and with other children, many others live at home. The street is the place where they earn income and find their social networks. Most are in some risk of servitude to adults who use them in their prostitution, drug and other criminal activities, and many find themselves involved with the law as a result of direct and indirect criminal activity. Many leave the street to go to worse situations, into indentured labour and into prisons. Few are in any kind of educational programme.

As with working children generally, the specific conditions under which these children come to the street, and stay there, are still not well understood. Data as to numbers, causes and conditions are limited. There are assumed, however, to be over 100 million worldwide, chiefly young boys. It is clear, however, that while their conditions vary, they all include exclusion at other levels – lack of health care, security from violence or sexual exploitation, no or sporadic access to educational opportunities. Some choose to be on the street; the majority, however, are there because they have few other choices. They are the victims of dislocation caused by conflict or economic crisis or of parental abuse and/or abandonment. They are victims of family poverty, forced out to fend for themselves or to augment the family income. Schools also contribute to sending children into the street where, instead of serving to 'offset and even compensate for society's and parental failings, by providing a propitious environment for human growth [they] have themselves become scenes of violence (A. Tay, communication, in IWGE, 1999).

*In institutions.* Excluded children are also found in **institutions**. Placing children with disabilities, in trouble with the law, or without adequate family and community support away from society's sight happens in most countries, to varying degrees and for varying reasons. Though justified in terms of serving the child's 'best interest', the underlying rationale is often one of making the management of that child, by society or the sector, easier. In not all cases, of course, do such children fall within the parameters of exclusion as used in this paper. Professionally managed, child-friendly and rights-based institutions, with strong links to the community, can provide precisely the kind of support an at-risk or abused child needs to establish a sound intellectual and psychosocial footing, from which he or she can then move forward.

But these conditions are not the norm. Brazil is but one country where children and adolescents from the streets make up a significant proportion of the population of detention centres, children with no access to resources or to school. In Eastern Europe, the practice of institutionalizing children considered to be 'uneducable' persists, based either on a perception that the influences of disability cannot be mitigated, or on a disinclination to try. Institutionalization is also based on inflexibility in the face of cultural or linguistic differences, especially of groups considered to be ethnically inferior. And it is based on an unwillingness to invest limited resources in children not seen as able to 'pay back' society's investment through their eventual financial independence (the case of children considered to be intellectually diminished in some way). All of these are reasons for policy and practice decisions to put them aside.

In countries that have come through war or economic crisis, children are in institutions as a result of a breakdown in the ability of communities and social-support agencies to provide more light-handed support. In Cambodia, for example, serious shortfalls continue in the human and fiscal resources of its social welfare sector which, when coupled with the many still-unstable communities, results in children continuing to be put into 'orphanages'. These offer little more than basic custodial care. Not all such children are orphans; many are abandoned because of poverty or family breakdown; because they have disabilities of some kind; or because their parents are lost. Regardless of cause, few are adequately supported in these institutions. They are rarely helped to realize their full psychosocial or intellectual development. Only recently have efforts been made to facilitate linkages to the formal schools and wider community.

*In war and conflict.* With increasingly horrific damage, **excluded children are in situations of war**, or the persistent communal conflicts and dislocations which are the precursors and aftermath of war. Over the past decade, in addition to the estimated 2 million children in armed conflict, several times that number have been injured and permanently disabled, exploited as soldiers, starved and exposed to extreme brutality (Machel, 1996, Paras. 2–3). Millions more have been displaced, internally and into other countries.

For all these children, 'the entire fabric of their societies [has been] torn to pieces', homes, schools, health systems and religious institutions (Machel, 1996, Para. 29). And these social traumas have not tended to be short-term, one-off instances, but to 'drag on for long periods with no clear beginning or end' (Machel, 1996, Para. 22), creating in yet another way, a cycle of serious and endemic exclusion and 'endless struggles for survival'. Long after fighting ends, many children continue to feel its repercussions, forced on to the street or into factories as communities, governments and even their families focus on priorities other than children and education. They are further excluded where the focus of education reconstruction is on

replicating previous elitist structures, or bringing in a foreign, often donor-preferred, system without considering the implications for social dislocation.

The significance of this for children and adolescents can be tragic. Facing the same trauma as adults, they often do so without the capacities they need to act in their own best interest and without the support of families, communities or opportunities for learning. Children who suffer most from exploitation and abuse, as child soldiers or girls forced into prostitution, are likely to be those already at risk or in trouble from exclusion. Conflicts tend to grow from conditions of social disintegration, and many of these children were previously found in communities where systems failed and forced them away from support services, including school.

Even where schools exist, 'children may not be able to enrol because they lack proper documentation, are not considered residents of the area or are unable to pay school fees. Feelings of exclusion, and the struggle for survival and protection, may lead children to join parties to the conflict or to become street children' (Machel, 1996, Para. 82). In the course of the ten-year Liberian civil war, the number of teachers is estimated to have dropped from 12,000 to 4,000–5,000; approximately 10,000 to 15,000 child soldiers acquired 'little education and no marketable skills'; and 20,000 to 30,000 primary-school-age children 'have not attended regularly in the last seven years' (UNICEF/Liberia, 1999, p. 2).

Vulnerable and excluded children are found where their government's military and civil action against domestic minorities or other perceived threats blatantly make them the weapons, as well as the victims, of war. Burning schools, intimidating and murdering teachers and destroying books are all weapons of choice in policies to deny children both the immediate opportunity to learn and undermining any potential they might have for recapturing a life of normal development and effective participation later on. International sanctions imposed against hostile countries can also exacerbate exclusion when they are applied 'too bluntly', and where they are inadequately monitored to ensure that the impact does not fall on children.

A most critical message for education from Machel concerns the durability and scope of conflicts, and their permanent impact on the exclusion of large numbers of children. Persistent instability, unpredictability and randomness of even low-grade violence 'which never begins or ends' produces a generalized vulnerability . . . years of lost schooling and vocational skills will take equivalent years to replace and their absence imposes a greater vulnerability on the ability of societies to recover after war' (Machel, 1996, Para. 186). The interdependencies of exclusion will guarantee that this 'greater vulnerability' will fall most heavily on those least able to cope, already-marginal families even more hard-pressed to find financial and psychological resources for ensuring the health and emotional

well-being of children, and less likely to have a future-looking faith which might make investing in education a sensible use of resources. Systems have fewer opportunities to provide them and those they have are 'of lower quality'. Funds are short; the supply of materials slow and erratic; fear and disruption making it difficult 'to create an atmosphere conducive to learning' (Machel, 1996, Para. 188).

*In refugee settlements and displaced.* Immediately consequent (and often simultaneous) to children being excluded through war, they are being excluded in their millions in refugee camps and as the internally displaced. For many such children, this netherworld is a more-or-less permanent condition. Lao and Palestinian refugees, for example, have seen several generations born in camps; Afghan refugees have been in the Islamic Republic of Iran for some twenty years. As with other social-support structures, the education available to these children and their families is precarious. Host governments rarely allow open access to the regular school system; even when able to attend, refugee children often face exclusions of discrimination, social harassment and failed communication (cultural and/or linguistic). Motivation within refugee communities to educate their own children may be high, but their capacity to manage coherent and consistent programmes is typically not. In the Afghan case, in the 'few refugee schools which are run, . . . classes in all [of them] are very small, overcrowded and under-equipped'. Implying ongoing exclusion, they are also not formally recognized and no certification is given (UNICEF/Iran, 1999).

### **What excluded children are doing**

*They are working.* Among the most obvious *causes* and *consequences* of exclusion is the fact that children who are not in school are not sitting idle. They are at home, generating income or filling in for working parents; they are in the field, in factories, and on the street. Definitions of work vary by type, level of hazard or exploitation and the amount of time involved, making detailed figures on working children difficult to calculate with certainty. Broadly, the number of children in the developing countries estimated to be working, full- or part-time, is 250 million.

Asia, reflecting conditions chiefly in South Asia, continues to have highest absolute numbers of working children. As of 1997, 120 million children between ages 5 and 14 were 'fully at work', and there are many more for whom work is a secondary activity (*Invisible Children* . . . , 1997, p. 2). In Cambodia, 1996 statistics indicated 16% working children between ages 5 and 17, most of these in fisheries and agriculture and the rest in domestic service, scavenging and small factories or sweatshops. In some East Asian and Pacific countries, one in three households depend on their children's labour; and 2% to 16% of the region's gross national product is earned through a sex industry in which, for some Mekong countries, 33% of those involved are under 16 (UNICEF/EAPRO, 1998, p. 5).

Statistics from elsewhere are no better. In the most seriously affected provinces of Brazil, over 700,000 children aged 10 to 14 are 'working and not attending primary school'; over 2 million work and attend part time. Another 2 million or so of 15- to 17-year-olds are similarly distributed. In addition, close to 600,000 5- to 9-year-olds are 'in the work market', and while below official school-starting age, are seriously risking both their future life and their eventual success in school by undermining their health and establishing patterns of family income earning which are hard to break (UNICEF/Brazil, 1999).

Poverty statistics on working and street children relate closely to their exclusion from education. In 1993 in New Delhi, 63% of working children were illiterate; 17% completed primary school and 61% of the girls had never been to school. In Yangon, 39% had no schooling and 54% had dropped out by second grade. 64% of Cambodian street children are estimated not to attend school, most are girls; estimates for minority children in remote areas are worse (Suvira, 1994, p. 51). Histories of working children with respect to exclusion from education are all too similar: rural areas with no or incomplete access to primary schools; low-income families, single parents with limited educational background; marginal urban areas with few, overcrowded schools; communities and schools with high levels of crime and violence; school failure, repetition and abuse.

Two critical issues for all these children are *choice* and *consequences*. Research suggests that many want to work – to support families, have the freedom to make their own life-decisions, avoid ineffective and unfriendly schools. The fact is also that many do not. Interviews with eighty-four Cambodian street children found that 'the majority aspired to go to school because they wanted to read like other people and get a job' (Suvira, 1994, p. 53). Where children do choose to work, many of these choices are pyrrhic; the consequences serious and long term. Their jobs may give them immediate and necessary income, but little of the knowledge or skills to enable them to move to better, more flexible, stable or financially secure employment. Much of the work is informal, providing a life of limited alternatives and increasing dependency on the vagaries of uncertain economies, unscrupulous adults, political expediency and fleeting charity. It also creates a great deal of personal risk, subjecting girls especially to sexual abuse.

Working children of *seasonal migrant families* are probably less at risk than those who work on their own, protected for the most part within the framework of a coherent community structure. They are, however, vulnerable to exclusion on a wide range of social dimensions, including education, given families' often high levels of poverty, the unhealthy working conditions (especially for young children) and the instability of an enforced transient lifestyle. In Mexico, over 3.5 million people are estimated to be in seasonal agricultural work, with numbers increasing 'as one of the few alternatives to survival' given the endemic poverty, lack of productive infrastructure and deteriorating natural resources of their communities

(UNICEF/Mexico, 1999). Approximately 900,000 of these are children, 50% under 14. Their contribution to family income is critical, estimated at over 30%, but at a cost: 40% illiterate; 21.5% never in school.

Globally, the number of children in this situation is again difficult to assess. The living conditions and size of such 'floating communities' are often not well monitored by governments; nor is their children's absence from school. The dilemma is in how to provide appropriate educational opportunities and facilitate learning when the children's work is so intimately woven into their lives. It is clear that there are risks to both the children and their families in forcing them into educational arrangements in ways that undercut the stability they have managed to create. But without an education, their future is unlikely to be less vulnerable than their present.

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### Summary

Irrespective of the particular categorization, all excluded children reflect a situation where *societies and their governance systems simply do not care enough*. Many of the conditions which make children vulnerable and put them at risk may be unplanned, but this implies failure by omission: exclusion is created because priorities are not on children, and especially

not on those considered in some way to be expendable. Many policy-makers and systems '... don't consider the poorest and marginalized important enough. The unreached are not politically powerful; they have no voice' (Black, 1998, p. 114); '... in many places, there is not a political decision to reach the poorest. Usually they do not complain, or no one can hear their voices and cries. No one represents them nor asks for their rights' (Andrade, 1998, p. 114). Without a strong advocacy voice on behalf of such children and their families, it appears there is little incentive for pro-active action in taking on the political and financial costs involved.

Equally serious are the problems of exclusion created by commission. National policies pouring resources into the military instead of helping vulnerable communities to move their children from work and into good schools, exclude. Donor countries exclude the education rights of vulnerable children by tying aid to domestic purchases and by focusing on countries and issues more likely to produce trading partners than on global social equity. Policy-makers actively exclude when they choose to ask for 'quick fix' answers rather than making long-term programme commitments. Designers of social programmes exclude when they develop activities which are 'mostly remedial, not designed to help build poor people's capacity and strengthen with dignity their own potential ... do not speak to the needs and expectations of the homeless and hopeless' (Cerqueira, 1998, p. 115). ■

# Practice and progress since Jomtien

## Introduction

*On the plus side, progress has been made:* the decade since Jomtien has laid a solid groundwork for action against the exclusion of children, in terms both of education as a defined sector, and of learning as a cross-cutting process necessary to all aspects of survival and development. The World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) was a watershed, a critical juncture in global thinking about the legitimate place of learning and education as core to all human and social development. Jomtien established an unarguable link between poverty and exclusion, for the individual and the society; exposed the failure of most nations to provide adequate basic education for all their citizens; and confirmed the inevitability of future exclusion for those children and their families who are denied access to such education. Critically, it set a new 'expanded vision' for education and declared national and global responsibilities for taking action.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provided the critical overarching framework for EFA in making the education of all children their *right*. It committed a global imperative of action to ensure *all* children an *effective* education, not simply to a seat in school and not simply for those who turn up. Governments, civil societies and donors are now compelled to give highest priority to an explicit and intensive focus on the chronically excluded: under the CRC umbrella, all children are owed an education which meets their basic learning needs and enables them to live an individual life in society . . . 'in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity' (CRC, Preamble). Responsibility for providing this quality of education for all rests with everyone in world society, at global, national and – by extension – local levels. Ultimately, of course, much of the onus for children's learning and education falls on families and schools.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education further refined and focused the message of EFA, committing the international community to addressing the large-scale and typically systemic exclusion of those children with special learning needs. This continues to be a problem in all countries to some degree, both by education systems *omitting* to identify, count or support children's special learning needs, and by their *committing* actively against them, declaring children who are 'different' as incapable of learning or participating. For children in either context, Salamanca was important in placing more explicitly on the global EFA agenda the imperative of recognizing, valuing and managing their learning; and doing so in ways that ensure their full partici-

pation in education, the successful realization of their learning goals and, ultimately, their independence as adults able to sustain themselves as parents, workers and citizens.

Salamanca was also the key to reinforcing and extending the EFA principle of an expanded vision of education, one in which 'ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions' (UNESCO, 1999*d*, p. 1). 'Inclusive' schools give particular attention to enabling the learning of each child, serving to integrate all and not to segregate any. They serve to bring all children into mainstream education. Salamanca recognized that '*regular* schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (*Salamanca Statement*, 1994, Article 2).

Less a formal international commitment than a global re-declaration of the central place of learning and education for all, the Delors Commission (UNESCO, 1996) served further to underscore the role of education as a basic element of individual and societal development and peaceful coexistence. In confirming the capacity to learn as the 'treasure' everyone has within them, the task of education is to ensure all children (and adults) the right to life-long learning along four core dimensions or *pillars*: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together*. Some have added a fifth: *learning to transform oneself and the world around one*.

In both general and specific terms, all these initiatives placed education at the centre of action in support of the children who are most excluded, as both a tool for their development and a place for their protection. Regional meetings in Stockholm, Oslo, Cairo, Amsterdam, Beijing and other international actions have, through the remainder of the past decade, made substantive contributions to the EFA framework. Their discussions and commitments have taken a harder look at the realities of the especially vulnerable and forgotten child and, within this framework, the special protection and development rights of girls and women.

The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), Copenhagen, March 1995, was especially important in looking specifically *across* all groups and sectors to consider the interactive nature of socio-economic exclusion and development. In consequence, it stressed the need for *integrative* strategies and *collaborative* actions by domestic institutions, NGOs and international agencies to deal with them. Suffering to some degree by not having a clear constituency to keep its 'Action Framework' on the table, the WSSD nevertheless presented a significant opportunity to push the critical role of learning as the enabling dimension of all organizational and social change aimed at social integration: ' . . . the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and

solidarity as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life. . . . It requires the protection of the weak, as well as the right to differ, to create and to innovate' (*Copenhagen Declaration*, 1995, Part II, Para. 2).

The WSSD thus made critical distinctions between inclusion and conformity and between diversity and exclusion, distinctions and implied directives central to realizing effective and *equitable* education. It went further, urging specific actions to mobilize funding of the 'Agenda for Development' to which the summit participants had committed themselves: reduced military spending; enhanced transparency and accountability at all levels; better focusing on basic human needs; recognition and support to alternative financing mechanisms; open exchange of technology, knowledge and skills; application of the '7%' Official Development Assistance/ODA commitment, debt relief, and action on the 20/20 initiative. All these factors, if coupled with concerted action to address the professional quality of teachers and curricula, would clearly have gone far to ending education exclusion. The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), though not yet as far advanced as it needs to be in mobilizing and ensuring effective collaborative and consistent action on children's exclusion, is clearly the way to go. Multilateral agencies, NGOs and bilaterals each have their own areas of comparative advantage, mandates and partners. Each, however, shares a common constituency of people who are excluded, marginalized and living in poverty, and to whom it owes action that is relevant, sustainable and of high quality.

*On the other side, more is to be done.* Progress in following up all of these global agreements is far from wholly positive. While enrolments and school spaces have increased, these 'have not been matched by gains in ensuring that pupils persist in their schooling and emerge from primary school with the knowledge and skills they need. . . . [The] expected benefits . . . are being undermined by significant levels of drop-out' in both developing and developed countries (UNESCO/ICF-EFA, 1998b, p. 9). *The Jomtien target of 80% completion for primary school is still a very distant goal in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and much of Latin America.* The 80% figure is no longer, of course, tenable under the CRC. In presenting this number as sufficient, Jomtien may have suggested that 'the rest' could legitimately be left to fail or not to count at all – in effect, serving to legitimize exclusion.

In focusing on UPE as an expressed goal, and defining that within the specific context of *schooling*, Jomtien ironically may also have served to undermine the probability of its own key concept of the 'expanded vision' taking root. *Education for all has become minimized in too many countries and too many agencies as school for all.* The expanded vision of basic education is inclusive of, but clearly greater than, formal schools and traditional classroom methods. Though the WCEFA strongly endorsed the place of alternative educational arrangements within the vision (various forms of NFE, ECCD, on-the-job

learning, etc.), the UPE-cum-schooling emphasis appears to have left them relegated to a second-class, choice-limiting status. The CRC is significant in changing the paradigm. Eight out of ten children completing primary school is no longer the issue; two out of ten *not* completing is.

The EFA Declaration was important in establishing the core of what effective education and learning systems should be, the 'what' of basic education. Jomtien and the succeeding decade have been less clearly successful, however, in making explicit, and putting into effect, the 'how' of mobilizing subsequent action; of stimulating demand and improving supply. The Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (Amman, Jordan, June 1996) provided a useful, albeit justifiably modest, stocktaking of the progress made in the first five years. It, too, was unfortunately vague in analysing the 'how' of why the Framework was not being fully implemented. Where and what the implementation gaps were, and how to fill them – especially with respect to such fundamental issues as the training of teachers and mobilizing of sustained political action – remained largely unknown.

Nor has the decade finished strongly in terms of tracking the progress of EFA targets. While anecdotal evidence suggests that many innovations are showing good effects, *there is little systematic assessment* of them. Many of the advances reported are based either on broad averages, or narrowly focused pilot efforts, both of which have drawbacks in terms of informing wider practice. Monitoring and tracking systems remain universally weak, not well able to determine the real quality and impact of many of the interventions on, or the deeper reasons for, continuing exclusion. Rare also are the comprehensive case studies and implementation analyses that might present the kind of integrated social development picture urged by the WSSD. Instances of serious and interactive exclusion remain without good explanations as to how to disentangle them.

Highlighted throughout the Johannesburg Sub-Saharan Africa Conference, for example, were the multiple needs of *creating stronger capacities* for analysis, of *undertaking research*, and of *using results* to inform policy and practice. Data throughout the continent are considered to be weak in quality, narrow in scope and limited in quantity. In particular, too little is known of patterns and trends on such key issues as participation and achievement, especially concerning the children who are at risk and excluded – girls, children with disabilities, minority groups. Analysis is often poorly carried out, not considered sufficiently reliable, and not presented with sufficient assurance, to mobilize, guide or evaluate change.

*School and community-based action research is rare.* Teachers, parents and students have little input to assessments made within the education sector as it affects them. What is happening in the classroom, what teachers and students are

actually doing, is rarely observed let alone analysed. While a wide range of innovations and pilot programmes are being tried through the region and may well be relevant to the excluded – on community and outreach schools, multi-grade classrooms, double-shifting, use of quasi-professional resource teachers – few are being systematically assessed to determine whether or how they are making a difference, to which children, and under what conditions. Lack of analysis makes it difficult to take corrective action on the unsuccessful ideas; to strengthen and extend those that are effective; or to share lessons.

The types of study currently being promoted by the UNESCO/UNICEF Monitoring Learning Achievement/MLA project and by regionally-based projects such as the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, are steps in the right direction. They will focus particularly on the more *qualitative factors* impeding access and successful participation of especially vulnerable children, and on the relevance of what they are learning. These assessments also need to be persistent (to identify patterns) and participatory (to ensure shared ownership of conclusions and follow-up action).

*The use of 'pilot' projects as the mechanism for focusing and managing action for the excluded* also merits closer attention. Pilots are often undertaken because '[it is] difficult for people to agree on the pace of change'; they let small groups of mobilized people do it on their own (Lieberman and Miller, 1999, p. 26). Unfortunately, the logic of pilots often fails in application, leaving them 'outside the mainstream, threatening people in the rest of the [system] and causing resentment. Eventually, most of these programmes collapse, not from lack of value, but from lack of support' (Lieberman and Miller, 1999, p. 26).

Where they involve marginal communities, those with few resources and little room for experimenting, they are often too demanding to be sustained. Real control over planning, design and implementation of most pilots rests with interveners rather than with the schools and communities involved; and efforts to develop local capacity are often too limited to shift the ownership. Sustaining the results of innovation requires serious, long-term attention to the change process, to organizational learning and to participation. These are the necessary conditions of 'full scale' implementation, which many EFA pilots have tended not to give.

Ministries of education need to assert their strong commitment to the excluded in this area. 'Although the educational innovations targeted to various excluded groups are often managed and executed by NGOs, it is essential that the Ministries are involved from the initial [stage] by, for example, assigning . . . officials to work with the innovations or by directing some resources; and later adopting the innovation for dissemination. Separate projects which are not well incorporated in the framework of the national education system tend to [be] short-lived' (UNESCO, communication, 1999).

*Summary.* The first part of this chapter has touched very generally on where EFA seems to have come in terms of commitments made and directions expected. The remainder looks in more detail at some of the advances, lessons learned and dilemmas recognized with respect to those conditions specifically excluding children.

These are not presented as watertight compartments. Rather, there are recurrent themes and common threads, principles of action which appear to characterize moves towards more effective and sustainable action, not simply against exclusion, but in support of inclusion (as the *Salamanca Statement* put it). These themes are not new: broad *participation and synergy*, within a *holistic framework* and using *enabling processes* to ensure *local relevance*. These are the concepts and principles underlying all the international commitments noted above. What must be new for the next decade is that *action is taken* to actually implement them – by states, civil societies and the international community.

### **Expanded participation in a holistic framework**

Perhaps the two most significant advances of the decade since Jomtien in reaching excluded children, indeed all children, have been (a) the increasing realization that education, like learning, is a necessarily holistic and integrated system, and (b) the persistent movement towards greater participation of communities, families and children in matters concerning learning, education and schools. Coincident with both of these has been a more sensitive appreciation of teachers and school as critical actors; a 'distinct trend toward focusing the reform efforts at a level nearer to the "action": the school itself' (Shaeffer and Govinda, n.d., p. 1).

None of these developments is revolutionary. All, however, are fundamental and mutually reinforcing in reaching the excluded. They recognize that no education policy will be sustainable by attempting to mandate attitudinal or behavioural change from the centre, or in one narrow aspect of the system. They acknowledge that genuine implementation of change in classrooms, families and communities that are socio-culturally and economically marginalized and at risk requires equity, transparent accountability and joint responsibility.

### **Expanded participation**

*The family.* Participation in the context of excluded children most particularly concerns their families. The concept of the family as a place of security and support for children and as a partner of the school has been slowly emerging over the past decade as efforts are made to find better ways to address the rights and needs of *all* children to education. Facilitating that emergence should be happening more quickly. The CRC in



particular recognizes families and parents as the first line of intervention in, and support for, children's emotional, psychosocial and intellectual learning. The capacity, or incapacity, of families to act on behalf of the survival, protection and development of their children is especially critical in the early years, and not much less so as children become adolescents and begin to confront the confusion of uncertain and conflicting choices and demands. Families are the key in keeping children out of exploitative working conditions and in school; the opposite is equally true.

Again recognizing exclusion as a cycle, the education level of the family is the 'single best predictor of how long children will stay in school and how well they will perform' (UNESCO/ICF-EFA, 1998b, p. 36). It is much more difficult for illiterate parents and those who have been harmed by schools to see the value of education for their children, or to help them to participate even when they do. Programmes promoting parent literacy, therefore, are also likely to have positive effects on children's learning. Mobilization campaigns to get girls into school are most successful when they take place in collaboration with the family – and with community leaders, civic groups and NGOs – the bodies that are often in closest touch with the values and needs of families and so most able to influence their decisions. The particular importance of the family during times of stress is clear. Conflict, forced migration and economic crisis are periods when family stability and consistency are the child's best link to learning, adaptation and sense of identity, and when the loss of family can be especially devastating. The effectiveness of action such as that by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in working with Indonesian *families* to put in place scholarships for the children most at risk will be critical in this regard.

One area in which gains have been made in this respect is the greater attention being given to *early childhood care and development interventions*. Most successful where set within the context of their families, ECCD programmes recognize that 'only with whole-hearted parental participation can such programmes succeed' (Young, 1996, p. 7). They are critical in countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic where, especially among indigenous families, primary-school attendance is very low. The village-based early childhood education project (with the Ministry of Education, Lao Women's Union and UNICEF) is concerned with children's early learning within the framework of support *both* for their own developing capacities, *as well as* the capacities of their caregivers, especially mothers. The project strengthens family knowledge and practice in basic nutrition, hygiene and health and child development, including infant stimulation and ways to increase language ability. It links with women in development/WID and basic-education interventions 'so that there is support for increased income generation, village planning and schooling'; and with the media and early childhood education sub-project to produce educational radio broadcasts, videos and print material on good parenting, nutrition and child development practices.

For seriously at-risk children, and those unlikely to have access to reasonably effective schools, ECCD interventions may be the only quality learning support that they will have. It is, therefore, especially critical that the interventions should be of high quality: learning and learner-oriented, interactive and participatory, culturally sensitive and responsive, holistic and engaged with all family members and the community agencies with which they also interact.

Programmes which are able to engage with marginalized families, to work with them in the context of the constraints and strengths of their own setting, and which bring them together to support one another, are the most effective. They impose less risk to vulnerable families, allowing them to find their own 'best way' in developing strategies of childcare and learning that they are able to sustain in collaboration with neighbouring families and local support agencies. A main difficulty with efforts to engage such families in changing their relationship with the school is, of course, their own negative history with education – if they have had one at all. Parents who have themselves been excluded from school are less likely to have the knowledge, skills or psychological 'margin' for risk-taking which would make them feel naturally comfortable in their children's school.

One example of an attempt to overcome this distance is the school-based education project in Peru. Working through activities aimed at developing a shared vision, breaking down dysfunctional perceptions and creating a partnership among parents, students and teachers, the underlying strategy of the programme has been '... to start a dialogue on the child as a priority for parents and for teachers' in terms of their shared responsibility in the child's education. Parents and teachers work together '... to formulate solutions and alternatives which could help create the "ideal" school' (Hidalgo, 1997, p. 4). At the same time, teachers develop 'conversations' with students, on the assumption that they, too, are in a position to have opinions about the quality and content of their learning and have the capacity to contribute (Hidalgo, 1997, p. 5). The task is an evolutionary and open-ended one, attempting to create a *culture of inclusion* where both community and school are able to bring together their expectations and priorities, evaluate options for 'translating them into reality' and developing frameworks of action they can then work to apply (Hidalgo, 1997, p. 6).

Interventions such as this are critical to building on and strengthening the learning within families in ways that will help them engage with the school. It is important that schools themselves reach out to support families, especially the vulnerable ones, in doing better, to encourage them to '... be involved throughout their children's schooling ...' (Bamber et al., 1996, pp. 1–26). The results of a large-scale study of poor inner-city schools in the United States, for example, showed clearly that effective schools were those that were able to help parents to change the ways in which they connected to the school and promoted their children's learning as they moved through the system. Beginning when children were very young, these

schools helped parents to help their children in 'building the skills' they needed to do well in school. They 'coached' parents in how to talk to teachers, helped them '... to monitor their children's progress' and support them with their schoolwork. Effective schools helped parents to learn 'how the system works' so they could be better advocates for their children, to 'make decisions about how to make the school better', and to make sure that their children were 'learning what they needed to know' (Bamber et al., 1996, pp. 1–11).

*The community.* It is important to recognize families per se, their unique role in creating and raising children and the need to take them into one-to-one partnership. But most excluded families and their children live in the context of a community. Less a geographical construct than a sociological one, communities are important here as the primary reference group for families and their children (especially older ones). Particularly in traditional societies and cultures, communities can play a major role in defining a family's available resources and support structures, its social obligations, and its core values, attitudes and expectations. The community in this sense is especially critical in addressing exclusion. No attempt to create equitable and inclusive education programmes for children and families will succeed independently of their surrounding community.

Using this broad definition of community, the learning and education of excluded children can be enhanced where families and local groups come together to support them in formal and non-formal programmes, with and without government support. Excluded children can also be supported through 'communities of interest', networks formed among them as individuals who share a common bond of vulnerability. These are child labourers or street children who form family-type bonds; or support groups formed by adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS. Mutual support and exchange associations of these kinds can constitute significant forms of psychosocial 'margin'. They provide a sense of belonging, a nurturing role and guidance; often they also provide very pertinent and effective venues for learning information and skills. They can provide critical focal or entry points for education interveners, as interlocutors able to interpret between an NGO or school outreach initiative and children unable to communicate effectively or from a position of equal participation what they want and need to learn.

Communities, whether geographical or interest-based, can also play a critical role in finding and engaging 'missing' children. Informal associations of child carpet-workers in India, for example, have proved to be much better able to locate other children and convince them that it is safe to get involved in learning programmes than are officials from the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour or from the government.

Somewhat more systematic, **Lok Jumbish** in Rajasthan is another example of community-based mapping of the

excluded, where and as they are. Working with community members interested in educational improvement, it creates an 'inspirational group' which then undertakes to 'depict every household in the village visually on a simple map ... indicating the schooling status of every household member [aged] 5–14' (PROBE, 1999, p. 107) Serving as an 'occasion for interacting with the community', block-based interviews help to show where special help is needed and what priorities families see as barriers to their children attending school. 'Leaders of the village and the local community draw up a set of proposals based on the mapping data, where new schools and NFE centres are needed and where present ones need fixing.' The methodology is intended to be empowering as well as informative, allowing even non-literate families to be involved in the analysis. The follow-up is also community-based and is critical in fostering 'continuous evaluation'. Attendance of children is locally monitored and neighbourhood blocks are free to determine and revise appropriate issues and strategies (creating residential study camps for girls, for example).

The Myanmar All Children in School (ACIS) project is concerned with fairly broad systemic reform to reduce the severe national-level exclusion. In order to achieve this it focuses on an integration of three levels: the *community*, engaging people in enrolment surveys and school mapping, local data management and PTA training; *teachers*, providing decentralized training for multi-grade and learner-centred teaching, in-class supervisory support and materials development; and *school structures*, through promotion of school clusters and improved monitoring and evaluation. Significant for the potential sustainability of increased student participation, ACIS appears to be having a positive impact on the relationship between community and school: local teachers hired through community donations; a 'growing willingness' of teachers to talk with parents about their children's progress; and community-based identification and enrolment of previously 'invisible' children such as migrant workers (Bentzen, n.d., p. 11).

The Kolondieba District community schools project in Mali (supported principally by Save the Children/US) aims at addressing deep-seated, poverty-based exclusion. It is a particularly cogent example of the dilemmas facing communities and their children as they try to act on the very mixed 'causes and consequences' of that exclusion. Poverty is clearly the overarching issue for the communities, which have very few resources and minimal national support. Families live at subsistence level, speak the local language with a limited capacity in French, and have little access to the few and distant government schools. At the project's start in 1992, only 12% of the 207 villages in the district were reached by the formal system (Muskin, 1997, p. 2) and there was little to indicate that the situation would change. Community schools appear to be succeeding, however, as a way to shift the paradigm – from one of children trying and failing to accommodate within the formal system, to one of the community ensuring a school designed to suit them.

Based on explicit commitments by the community to ensure enrolment, regular attendance and girls' participation, and to pay salaries of locally hired teachers and monitor their work, the project has created learning environments to which children apparently want to come and in which they are, on the whole, succeeding. Teaching is in the local language, of subjects selected by the community as important to their children's current (and likely future) lives. Literacy, mathematics and French (at the higher levels) are also taught, as a base for children who eventually choose to move into the formal system.

The success of the schools appears to lie specifically in these efforts to localize content, process and ownership; but so, too, lie their core dilemmas. Teachers can be hired locally because they are minimally trained, and paid locally because they are paid very little. Curriculum can be relevant because it is developed locally, but it has little reference to the national system. All these characteristics are consistent with the fundamentals of creating inclusive learning, but not necessarily with inclusion beyond the community.

Critical questions must then be asked of all such community-based programmes. Whether the approaches are sustainable, and whether they should be; whether they risk confining excluded children to further exclusion in 'pockets of learning', positive but inevitably isolating. Children are learning in their community schools; in the Mali case, they are even laying a basis of French-language competency and there appears to be interest at the national level for extending the approach. Nevertheless, these communities and their supporters need continually to explore the children's long-term 'best interest': if the structures and methodologies of the education can be adapted and sustained; whether eventually the students must move out of the community to move up in the education system, and whether that system can somehow come into the community without undermining the latter's coherence and culture.

### Holistic and synergistic action

*At the local level.* One example of a community-based programme which has gone a considerable way towards answering some of these questions has done so because it has developed an *integrative* programme for excluded children and their families. Based in a slum area of Jaipur (India), the Bodh Shiksha Samiti is a good example – in the extent to which it has become part of the very fabric of the community, in the long timescale it has allowed itself, and in its forging of a genuine two-way link to the formal system.

The effective owners of the Bodh schools are the migrant and landless labourers, disadvantaged castes and traditional artisans who live in the community. With no previous access to schools sufficiently affordable, flexible or 'welcoming' for them, the community agreed in the late 1980s to engage with a small group of social activists to create a school as a form of 'collective endeavour' for their children's education (Bodh Shiksha

Samiti, 1997, p. 3). Seven schools have been built by the community over the past decade. A 'sense of ownership' and a bridge between school and community have also been built. The Bodh has ensured children's inclusion by becoming part of the community itself. It has been a process through which people in 'an organized framework pool their ideas, concerns, aspirations and resources, and develop a dynamic networking of communication among students, parents, teachers and Bodh organizers' (Bodh Shiksha Samiti, 1997, p. 5).

Together, they have worked through many of the core issues of exclusion: dealt with the absenteeism of working children and appropriate forms of discipline; negotiated teaching methodologies, balancing the benefits of active versus rote learning; selected curriculum topics appropriate to the life of the community; created relevant and affordable teaching materials; and jointly assessed children's ongoing progress. Confronting many of the barriers to the inclusion of socially marginalized children, the Bodh programme is holistic. It includes all aspects of community education, from pre-school through to adult literacy. Mothers and older children are trained as part-time resource teachers, creating another tie between school and community.

At the same time, emphasis is put on the continuous training of the full-time teachers in methodologies stressing participatory learning. The entire primary curriculum is divided into three broad ability groups, among which children can easily move as appropriate to their competencies rather than being fixed by age. Curriculum topics are flexible, but ensure coverage of basic issues, such as hygiene and nutrition, which are immediately useful to children and their families. A core of community-agreed generic-skills training (language and mathematics, analysis and reasoning) and attitude development (independence, co-operation, motivation for learning) aims at building children's capacities for future learning.

All this is intended to give the act of learning, and the process of education, a more valued place in the community, encouraging parents and children to pursue further study in the formal system. In preparation for this end, textbooks and written examinations are eventually introduced and, important in realizing that 'seamlessness' which is the key to inclusive education, an 'adoption programme' has recently started to work with and train teachers from the formal system in the main principles and teaching approaches of the Bodh programme. The aim is systematically to integrate aspects of the two educational approaches.

*Within schools.* Reaching excluded children and encouraging their participation requires making education, and especially schools, easily accessible, physically and emotionally welcoming and oriented to each child's learning capacities and needs. This may seem a self-evident point, but both the international community and national education systems have taken a long time in coming to it. In the broadest sense, it

means paying much greater attention to conceiving and organizing schools holistically.

More specifically, it means assessing schools, and acting to improve them, on the same lines as they have been using to keep out the most vulnerable children:

- *quality of the environment*, to create safe and girl-friendly physical facilities, policies and practices of non-violence and mutual respect;
- *modes of delivery*, to explore use of school clusters, multi-grade teaching, double-shifting and distance technologies;
- *methods of facilitating learning*, to use interactive small-group arrangements, peer and child-to-child tutoring, teacher-generated curriculum;
- *role of the teachers*, to encourage teacher-teacher support groups, peer counselling, in-service mentoring;
- *partnerships with families*, to develop school linkages, school-based ECCD, parent literacy and work-related programmes, PTA and school councils.

Such actions imply major shifts in thinking, in perspectives, in relationships and in ways of working. They require that those designing the innovations, and especially those delivering them, *be open and ready for change, for taking risks and for reflective experimentation*. This extent of support for learning is, unfortunately, not often provided in education reform efforts, especially when the targeted community is of low status or politically invisible. However, while application of change may not have gone very far since Jomtien, and the traditional top-down, information-transfer model of schooling remains the norm, serious efforts continue to be made to cast doubt on the efficacy of that traditional model and to create a new one.

The nomenclature for identifying these more holistic approaches varies among agencies and organizations. However, while problematic for the outsider trying to sort through the terminological stew, common threads are visible across most of them. The latest education policy framework of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), for example, speaks of a *whole school development* approach, 'designed to bring together and integrate the many inputs and processes which constitute the learning environment and the learning experience of children' (DFID, 1999, pp. 24–5). The approach includes *inter alia* a focus on school-based planning, on motivating and supporting teachers, on creating safe and secure school environments, on partnerships with families and community agencies, and on setting and monitoring reachable learning goals.

The wholesome education school programme in Bhutan, supported by SC-US, has a similar point of departure. Set within the broader context of an education reform effort with community-based change as its base, it includes aspects of community development education, participatory rural appraisal/PRA and skill-development for out-of-school youth,

and children's clubs. The programme's goal of increased inclusiveness is reflected in its integrative schools-based management and teacher-focused orientation. Considering 'the needs and rights of the whole child, [it] bridges health and education', encouraging schools to 'come up with their own plans' and helping them develop 'a self-assessment tool [to] help sensitize teachers to the concept, and show them that there are things they can do and . . . concrete steps [they] can take' (*Rights-based Approaches . . .*, 1999, p. 23).

One of the potentially most influential initiatives in this regard is the concept of the child-friendly school (CFS). Perhaps most energetically promoted by UNICEF, the concept is becoming increasingly reflected in similar approaches of agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO, 1999), Save the Children and Radda Barnen, bilateral donors and a number of national governments. In essence, the CFS framework aims at creating education systems and school settings that are inclusive, effective, equitable and secure for all children. The child-friendly school seeks to engage children and their parents in all aspects of the learning event; to be more welcoming of the diversity of children, and to keep them longer in the educational environment. It seeks to be more nurturing, academically professional and programmatically flexible. The underlying premise of the CFS is that all children must be provided positive learning opportunities, and that all must be *expected to succeed* no matter what their background and whether in or outside the formal school setting.

The child-friendly concept thus widens the framework. It assumes that learning, and society's commitment to supporting it, encompass children from birth through adolescence, whatever capacities they bring and whatever their learning needs. It assumes the need for partnerships with families and communities in developing facilities and programmes which are physically safe, foster a sense of security, well-being and self-confidence, and help children to respect themselves and others. It aims at promoting responsible and collaborative citizenship through abuse-free schools, codes of conduct, anti-bullying policies and training in peer mediation for 'peaceful playgrounds'. For teachers as well as children, it includes norms against all forms of harassment, no-tolerance policies against violence, and development of positive disciplinary alternatives to corporal punishment which are clear, consistent and provide support to teachers in their fair application. By engaging with families, the CFS seeks to become a place where children and adults can have conversations about issues of immediate concern to them (HIV/AIDS, drugs, sex, work and conflict) and about the values, attitudes and behaviours underlying them.

While certainly applicable to all children, then, the flexibility and responsiveness inherent in the concept are especially important for reaching the excluded in the 'especially difficult circumstances' where children, adolescents and families are particularly at risk. They are important when normative social

controls are breaking down – due to the rapid and unmanaged social change of communal conflict, urban stress or rural dislocation; and when families are not able to support their children because they are themselves fighting fragmentation or alienation.

Two programmes currently under way in Thailand reflect different approaches and emphases to the child-friendly concept and give a sense of its scope. Working under the auspices of the Office of National Primary Education, the Children's Integrated Learning and Development (CHILD) initiative in the north-east (with input from UNICEF) and the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) programme in the north (supported by SC-US) are both intended as fairly holistic interventions. Each involves several layers of activity, various strategies for engaging with schools and their communities and different types of content. Both deal with a range of schools and children, confronting problems of exclusion to varying degrees.

Situated in the poorest region of the country, CHILD takes a broad-brush approach to the child-friendliness concept, aiming to create a 'constructive context' in which children's learning is enhanced through the school, in collaboration with the community and in a holistic way. It begins with a 'futures search', to mobilize teachers, parents and students in thinking and talking about children's protection and development rights and agreeing to take action. The first most concrete action, offered as an enabling incentive, is on the micro level, introducing for the school's consideration a relatively simple computer-based management information system/MIS technology. Including computer and training, the technology helps teachers to organize and track data related to students' academic and health status.

The innovation at this level is not dramatic. It is easily accessible to teachers of even the most resource-poor schools and is, for the most part, manageable in its first stages by the expertise available. It moves previously scattered pieces of hand-noted data on each child into more visible patterns, 'whole pictures' of a student's developmental progress. In this, the key strength of the intervention is that it allows teachers to do more easily and effectively what they already do. At the same time, the project allows for growth. Teachers and schools are becoming increasingly more interested and expert in analytical manipulation and in thinking and talking together about students in more holistic and integrative ways. Some are looking for ways to add new and more locally important data to the MIS – on drug use, absenteeism, nutrition – and are working with students and parents on ways to address problems revealed by their analyses.

The Child-Friendly Schools project operates on the other side of the country, in a region characterized by relative wealth, the persistent social inequities and social trauma of marginalized hill-tribe communities, high rates of drug abuse and child prostitution and epidemic levels of HIV/AIDS. The project is framed

explicitly within the core themes of survival, protection and development, equity and participation. It begins with a relatively intensive Self-Assessment Process asking parents, teachers and students to define their *ideal* of a child-friendly school, and to contrast that with what they perceive to be the current situation. It then pursues a broadly focused intervention strategy based on a negotiation of the perceived gaps and creation of an agreed 'school charter'. Specific activities aim at strengthening home-community-school links, promoting the safe and secure psychosocial development of children, and introducing the notion of participatory active learning into classroom practice.

The logic of the child-friendly and teacher-engaged school appears to be proving intuitively sound in both regions, irrespective of social, economic and cultural differences. In large part, the positive response is a function of the holistic and non-restrictive nature of the concept, which allows each of the projects to be framed and implemented with considerable flexibility and adaptation. Each has been able to base the precise entry point, focus and evolution of its interventions on its respective schools, teachers and students as coherent organizational 'systems'.

More problematic here, and in 'piloting' initiatives generally, are the physical and psychological distance of the programmes from each other and from the national education policy centre, making communication and joint action difficult. From the perspective of articulating, managing and sustaining a *nationally* coherent and integrated 'child-friendly reform programme', it is obviously more difficult to promote change in a situation where each reform application and trajectory is different in approach and emphasis. It is more complicated to create and organize training materials and action, to plan inputs, or to track outcomes jointly. If the impact is to be sufficiently national in support and scope, it is especially important for projects like these to create and maintain transparent and regular communication, horizontally between the work in the field and vertically with the policy centre. Underlying principles of action must be openly and regularly discussed and implementation must be monitored and outcomes assessed in cooperation with the communities expected to be benefiting.

Though with limited attention to teaching and learning quality and academic performance, the overlapping health-promoting and healthy school initiatives of the World Health Organization (WHO, 1995, 1998a, 1998b) are conceptually consistent with that of the child-friendly school. They also are concerned with a holistic conception of children, with their lives both inside and outside the school and with building linkages between the school, family and community. Their main emphasis, however, is on mental and social health as the underpinnings of children learning to make sound choices (on factors such as nutrition, sexual behaviour, interpersonal relationships) and to protect themselves from high-risk behaviours, violence and abuse (to make better judgements, for example, and assess the veracity

of advertised information). They aim to foster healthy school environments, deliver appropriate health messages and interventions through the auspices of the school and its curriculum, and promote healthy life-style behaviours. They also project a more activist role for the school in providing input to health-promoting and violence-reducing public policy; reorienting community health and referral services to ensure effective diagnostic and remedial support for vulnerable children; and mobilizing community participation around child health and protection issues.

A third variation on this same theme is that of *inclusive education*, introduced at Salamanca. Intended to capture the ideals of CRC and EFA commitments through schools which are welcoming of all children, irrespective of capacities, UNESCO in particular is promoting this terminology as a direct counterpoint to education which excludes. Inclusive education aims to be 'transformative'. It includes advocacy (creating public platforms for people with disabilities), capacity development (training teachers, decision-makers, community leaders) and management strengthening activities (guidance for school staff, curriculum developers, supervisory systems). As with child-friendly and health-promoting schools, much of the focus of 'inclusive schools' has been on networking and professional development – to spread the idea in principle and ground it in practice. It is concerned with

identifying all forms of exclusion and barriers to learning within national policies, cultures, educational institutions and communities. It has implications for redirecting resources, inter-sectoral collaboration, teacher training, curriculum development, local capacity building and community involvement. It is about developing an education within communities which is relevant to local needs and maximizes the use of community resources to overcome problems. It requires everyone involved in supporting learning at whatever level in identifying and responding to priorities for development as they exist locally. It emphasizes the roles of communities and centres of learning in creating and sustaining each other (UNESCO, 1999d, p. 16).

All these programme approaches are, or should be, attempts to create *learner-friendly* schools; schools with teachers and managers who are able to recognize and build on the differences children bring to school, in gender, age, background and capacities. Simultaneously, they should be schools that actively seek out and remove the *barriers to learning* which might exist within their own arrangements and resources, barriers which prevent accommodating the mix of children who do come and which serve to keep others out. As a typology, it is critical that these are schools in which ECCD programmes are given high priority, tailored to the specific learner characteristics of the young child and the active inclusion of their primary caregivers. They must be schools that also give consideration to the particular learning styles and priorities of adolescents, as children in transition, to provide opportunities for genuine participation and to help them make linkages between the knowledge and skills of the school and those of the world outside.

They must be schools that help students at risk to test the parameters of their values, knowledge and capacities to act by inviting input from, and collaboration with, other youth-oriented institutions and services of the community. The recent efforts to implement a stronger life-skills orientation in and across programmes, to strengthen students' abilities 'to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into action' (Baldo and Furniss, 1999, p. 1) are especially critical for students in marginal communities who may have no chance other than school for guided exploration. They are important, too, for specific at-risk children and adolescents – for child workers, young soldiers, teenage parents, those who are HIV/AIDS affected – who may be able to engage only in non-formal education<sup>2</sup> settings. Again, the priority must be on forging links, on developing a *porous education system*, one allowing children and young people to move back and forth as their changing situations warrant.

*Within education systems.* An example of an effort to move in the direction of *greater synergy among various education development initiatives* is beginning in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a country with few resources, little bureaucratic capacity and almost no civil society participation. Most of its children are indigenous and most remain vulnerable, excluded from even minimal learning opportunities. Educational interventions, however, are beginning to happen in a number of sub-sectors. The overarching framework of all the donor interventions is important in their attempt to be explicitly integrative.

One of the more important structural components of these activities is the *cluster school*, intended to serve as a way to 'increase the participation of parents in the schooling of their children, to improve access to good teaching and learning materials, to increase learning achievement and decrease wastage rates especially among remote and indigenous areas' (Dykstra, 1999, p. 7). The cluster, an arrangement of some half-dozen schools linked administratively, serves to promote common use of materials and interaction among teachers and principals, including extended opportunities for joint training and more regular supervision. Parents are also encouraged to use the facilities of the cluster, and to contribute to its governance.

The administrative clustering of schools and implementation of joint activities is no doubt a necessary condition of sustainable synergy; it provides the skeleton. Equally important in this case, however, are the apparent commitments to ensuring that all other educational interventions also reinforce one another in content, process and community focus; and that all are based within an essentially learning-for-implementation

2. UNESCO is managing its own programming in this area. The Special Programme for the Enhancement of Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth aims at providing 'alternatives for action . . . innovative solutions . . . directly tied to an immediate improvement in living conditions' of especially excluded youth through non-formal education programmes (UNESCO, 1999a, p. 7).

paradigm. Thus, clusters are located in the same communities as village-based early childhood programmes, creating and facilitating parent-teacher-student associations to deal with issues of access and retention, especially for indigenous children.

Resource centres are built to train teachers from the clusters in materials production and localizing curriculum. These, in turn, complement efforts of the National Teacher Training Programme to upgrade untrained and unqualified indigenous teachers in the use of child-centred methods, increase their knowledge of the new curriculum, and help them work in multi-grade classrooms 'which comprise the majority of schools in ethnic areas'. None of this is very dramatic in the telling; it is also labour-intensive and slow in such a vertically managed and centrally controlled country. Nevertheless, it is an approach suited to institutionalizing an inclusive system.

*With out-of-school learners.* Holistic education recognizes the fact and critical importance of *learning beyond the school*. The Jomtien Conference opened wider the door unlocked a decade or so earlier by the Faure Report to the legitimacy of non-formal education. In its potential for flexibility of outreach and interactive teaching methodologies, out-of-school learning is not only legitimate, it is necessary if all children and young people are to have access to a comprehensive and truly seamless education. Community, non-formal, literacy and adult education are all terms which, in principle at least, operationalize the EFA 'expanded vision' of all people being able to address their basic learning needs at any and all points in their lives. 'For basic education to be equitable', and for it to be useful and inclusive, 'all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve *and maintain* an acceptable level of learning' (World Declaration . . . , 1990, Article 3-2). NFE is intended to do this.

Building on considerable experience from the previous half-century, the decade following Jomtien has seen an increasingly positive recognition accorded to the right and value of this kind of learning. It is often seen as the basis of marginalized and fragmented communities becoming 'empowered'. Much of this progress has been realized under the ambit of specific communities of people at risk (women, people affected by HIV/AIDS, subsistence farmers, street children) or of sectors with a strong outreach agenda (primary health care, water and sanitation, management of the environment ).

Although evaluations as always tend to be somewhat anecdotal, many of these programmes appear to have been fairly effective in mobilizing change at the grass-roots level, at least for the short-term benefit of those involved. Much of the change has involved children's learning, directly and indirectly, through early childhood development programmes and functional literacy or job training for youth. Unfortunately, there appears to have been relatively little community-based education aimed specifically at designing NFE programmes for the

long term. Nor has there been much attempt to strengthen linkages between families and the formal school; PTAs and other such mechanisms often remain little more than channels for eliciting school fees and local services.

One potentially significant impact of the increased status being accorded to non-formal education with particular relevance for excluded children, however, are programmes *allowing them to come back* – either to formal schools or more informally organized learning activities. Children who for whatever reason have been kept, or put, out of school are being given more opportunities to find appropriate 'learning spaces' when and as they are ready, irrespective of age or school history. Such second-chance education is especially positive where it combines curriculum elements of the formal system with more non-formal delivery arrangements; another movement towards the critical criterion of seamlessness.

The Mauritius basic education for adolescents (BEFA) programme on the island of Rodrigues addresses a situation of primary completion rates at less than 50%, with few children who drop out having the knowledge or skills either to manage their lives (problems of early marriage, drugs and alcohol, child labour are growing) or to find productive work. The BEFA programme provides a mix of life- and livelihood-skills modules, delivered through a variety of venues, often facilitated by secondary-school students. Participants are, in part, drawn to the programme by mobilization and outreach activities; in part also because the community and their families are active supporters of it. Unfortunately, while there is some co-operation with the formal school in BEFA management, there is less indication that the strengths of BEFA (learner-centredness, participatory approach, links with the community, peer-peer delivery) are being adopted by the formal side.

Uganda's Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE) project is in a much stronger educational environment and, while also concerned with presenting formerly excluded children with 'an alternative educational strategy', it has been able to do so with greater expectation of sustainable results. Significantly, COPE takes cognisance of the fact that many of these children have stayed out of school through conscious family decisions based on the logic of their circumstances. Living in poverty, families have considered their children's ability to work as outweighing the vague potential of an education system seen as low quality. COPE is important in being a strongly 'community-based initiative. . . . The community's choice of teaching times, school year and instructors gives it the power to provide an acceptable alternative to the formal system' (UNICEF/Uganda, 1998, p. 18).

The project is important, too, in attempting to de-link age from grade, involving children age 8 to 14 in multi-age groupings and learner-centred methods. Classes are small enough to allow some use of participatory methods, individualized attention and continuous feedback to students on their progress.

Significantly, it also emphasizes strengthening the capacity of locally recruited teacher-instructors through community-based in-service training.

COPE is understood to be a temporary solution to the problem of excluded children, one that will no longer be needed once the formal system is able to provide 'quality, affordable and accessible opportunities for all children' (UNICEF/Uganda, 1998, p. 19). This may be an overly shortsighted perspective in situations of probably fairly chronic poverty. Even once the formal system is better established, it seems likely that significant numbers of children and youth will continue not to enrol or to drop out early. This suggests that permanent action against exclusion requires programmes such as COPE to serve in an *equally permanent role*, extending the parameters of what constitutes 'legitimate' education. Non-formal education, functional literacy and training programmes have long provided a *recapturing role* of a kind, but rarely in ways that allow learners to draw on, or integrate with, the resources and contents of formal education. Even more rarely do they do so in ways that push the system to change. Both are centrally important in ending exclusion.

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### **Enabling processes: engaging with teachers**

The changes required to make education systems and schools inclusive imply new learning, sometimes in a major way, for both organizations and individuals. The common, and perhaps ultimate, thread in any successful such change is the *capacity of teachers to become more effective at enabling the participation of children and facilitating their learning*. Considerable effort has been made over the decade to improve this capacity, but in order to reach the excluded much more is needed.

Teachers are the key because they are, for most children, the main reference to school and the formal processes of learning. For all children, 'home and family lives do not simply disappear when they begin schooling. They take with them to school their health and ill-health *and* their contrastive accumulations of privileges and disadvantages' (Comber, n.d., p. 4). How well each child does in school is clearly a function of the repertoire of capacities each brings. It is equally a function of the teacher's ability to create an environment allowing each child to use and strengthen that repertoire to the fullest extent possible.

For children at risk, especially, it is critical that teachers have the capacity to create a facilitative learning environment. The factors that make children's learning vulnerable in the first place (deprivation in their early years, marginalized culture or language, pressures of poverty or work) cause them to suffer further where teachers are ill-prepared, uncertain or uninterested; or where the curriculum is inflexible. Suggestions on what needs to happen to enable inclusion are easy enough to make: child-friendly use of small groups, peer and cross-age

tutoring, home-based support. The 'how' is much more difficult for teachers. Ultimately, it falls to the teacher to ensure that the life-realities brought by the child are duly recognized. It is the task of the teacher to make the connections between family and school; to 'struggle with the connections between curriculum, school organization and the personal learning needs of students and design environments where learning can take place' (Lieberman and Miller, 1999, p. 21).

Capable teachers, committed to the well-being and learning of students, will to a significant degree compensate for most factors leading to a child's exclusion. When teachers have the motivation to reach out to each child as an individual learner and to parents as the critical third partners in their children's success at school, children will be included. Where teachers are prepared to build and maintain their professional competence in creating a secure and nurturing learning environment, ask challenging questions, encourage ideas and guide a discovery process, most children will succeed. The key lesson of the past decade, confirmed by earlier ones, is that good teachers are the bottom line of any serious or sustained effort to bring vulnerable children into educational programmes and keep them there.

Unfortunately, another major lesson of the decade is that teachers in many countries are also at the bottom of the line when it comes to recognizing their needs as professionals. Large numbers of the countries most in need of a strong teacher base are unable, or disinclined, to make the necessary effort to creating one. Little if any of the potential for child-friendly and inclusive schools will be realized if teachers are not themselves educated with the knowledge and skills of learner-oriented teaching, through training and supervisory approaches using the same methods. Their potential will fail if teachers are not sufficiently remunerated to stay in the classroom rather than seek second or third jobs outside; or if they cannot reach a level of standing and rapport in the community which allows them to work in partnership with parents and other social agencies.

This is not to suggest that progress is not being made. Chile's improving quality and equity in rural basic schools programme is an attempt to break the isolation of rural teachers, enhance their sense of professional quality and strengthen their ability to engage as partners with the wider community. Structurally, this is being done through teacher-managed learning clusters or 'microcentres'. Operating within a conceptual framework of mutual learning, shared problems and professional development, these centres allow 'development of conversations and the exchange of tales between teachers'. Through joint research and curriculum development activities, the centres are expected to become 'practising, learning communities' for the eventual decentralization of rural school design and development (Richards, 1996, p. 2). Communities are involved. Through parents, social agencies and the private sector, the aim is to broaden the scope of issues with which the teachers and their schools become engaged, developing partnerships in the



process and creating a 'synergy for action'. Joint analyses of the 'challenges of poverty' facing communities and their children allow them to be dealt with in more collaborative ways (Richards, 1996, p. 4).

Even the problems with teacher education in Pakistan noted above are at least to some degree being confronted, albeit largely through the auspices of donors, private institutions and NGOs. All are concerned with teachers and teaching issues linked to children at risk and excluded. Programmes train female teachers in remote rural areas and help them to establish primary schools for attracting girls. Associating teacher training with community-based programmes encourages local school management. Rural teachers are trained to guide children in learning from educational radio programmes. Their diagnostic skills are strengthened for identifying students with mathematics-related learning problems. Other programmes design durable teacher-training delivery *strategies*: in-service coupled with supervised practicum; internship training; and teacher-teacher, in-class mentoring through school clusters (*Putting the Child First . . .*, 1998, pp. 22–4).

Many of these programmes are apparently showing some success. It is important that the teachers involved are supported with regular supervised monitoring in the long term, however. Ensuring an explicit focus on excluded children is also crucial, along with tracking impacts on their learning, changes in their enrolment and retention, and whether there is any kind of 'halo' effect resulting from the more narrowly targeted training of these interventions on teachers' broader knowledge and skills (e.g. do the teachers apply the mathematics-oriented diagnostic methods to more general assessments of children's capacities?).

There are examples, too, of attempts to link the strengthening of teachers' capacities with systemic school reform. Myanmar's School-based Healthy Living and AIDS Prevention in Education (SHAPE) has entered the environment of AIDS and child-centred curriculum – difficult to achieve in that country – expressly through a 'teacher-up' process of school change. Student workbooks and written curriculum emphasizing interactive, exploratory and action-oriented learning are being created through in-service teacher-training workshops using these same methodologies. Cumulatively, the process provides teachers with a hands-on experience in the effective classroom management of important and relevant healthy behaviour matters. In the process, they are building their commitment to, and control over, the content and methods and strengthening their capacity to share that expertise with colleagues, parents and township education officers.

One controversial idea in respect of maintaining a professional teaching body is to give greater control to communities over the hiring, monitoring, paying and firing of teachers. On the one hand, this makes sense. It is important in engaging at-risk families and children in schools that they share in determining

who the teachers will be and how they will behave. Also, 'in an increasing number of countries . . . parents are becoming worried about teacher absenteeism and are demanding to be more involved . . .' (Gaynor, 1998, p. 16). On the other hand, ' . . . the rights of teachers must be safeguarded' (Gaynor, 1998, p. 17). Even the Malian community is not always regular in paying its teachers.

As in all other exclusion issues, the answer is one of balance. Continuing dialogue among all parties needs to be coupled with recognition of system responsibilities. It is unrealistic to expect economically and socially marginal communities fully to cover the costs of the teachers they need or to provide teachers with the professionally informed and consistent monitoring they need. Nor is it equitable. National commitment to the CRC implies national commitment to ensuring the means of creating and maintaining good education for all. Central governments must be involved to ensure training and monitoring professionally competent teachers, and to generate and distribute budgets for doing so.

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### **Local relevance: decentralization**

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Decentralization, in principle, provides the logistics and structures to allow education to be more locally relevant. It is intended to provide an environment more likely to encourage parents to be partners and children to participate. The decentralization of education systems has been increasingly recommended and tried over the past decade as fundamental to reaching the hard-to-reach. Schools which can make decisions at the local level, in partnership with families and students and in collaboration with other child-related agencies, should be able to understand what the needs and capacities of such children are, tailor their programmes accordingly and, together with these others, monitor impacts. Genuine decentralization should also allow schools, together with their communities, to adapt more quickly and flexibly to changing conditions, and to change these conditions, as they engage in joint situation analyses of exclusion and begin to take action to remove barriers and open up opportunities.

Unfortunately, few education bureaucracies have yet to allow this level of autonomy. Fewer still provide the human resources or the means of generating income that would allow a community to exercise such a mandate effectively. Decentralization implies new knowledge and behaviour; it requires community members and school staff to learn what the issues are and how to work collaboratively on them.

Towards undoing the extreme exclusion of children created by apartheid, for example, the South African Schools Act aims at almost revolutionary organizational change in moving management of schools to the local level and 'opening of school doors to all children'. The 'emphasis on governance

implies that the professional management at the school level must incorporate co-operative management and partnership among teachers, the principal, learners and the teacher representatives such as unions, professional associations and other stakeholders. . . . [It] will have implications for the ethos and management styles . . . schools will have to respond to diversity, deal with the disadvantaged and advantaged, and handle children of different race, sex, language and cultural backgrounds' (Luswata, n.d., p. 3). An obviously very serious commitment to decentralization, the programme implies a comprehensive reconsideration of the goals and tasks of education, in the schools themselves and in their relationships with its associated communities. It also implies the need for an ongoing and participatory knowledge and skills 'mapping' of the match between the capacities required and those available. The levels of learning implied are tremendous.

Decentralization involving such major systemic change is fairly rare. More typically, the strategy is simply to declare a one-off event to deconcentrate. Schools and communities are given the added responsibility of managing the substance and operations of local education, but none of the enabling conditions necessary for doing so: little new money and no new mechanisms for generating it; no framework or facilitated support for the kind of cross-cutting 'change process' elements included in the South African case. Because such actions are often taken in already fragile education systems, within poor and politically marginal communities, by failing to include such enabling conditions, many cash-strapped central governments seeking to divest themselves of all unwanted burdens are simply producing more exclusion.

Thus, though research is still limited in this area, there are indications that efforts at school-based management and locally controlled budgets under these conditions are actually doing little to improve school or student performance. In some cases, they are creating obstacles by failing to induce capable teachers to take on stronger leadership roles (Fiske, 1996, p. 27); by causing tensions in the schools as staff and leadership struggle to set priorities with no real frame of reference for doing so; and by forcing especially marginal students, asked for increasing amounts of special fees, to drop out. Also, decentralized management is a highly political act in a highly political system (Fiske, 1996, p. 5). It can threaten fundamental beliefs and values about the role of education; it can change power relations, resource allocations and control. Local exploitation can be as harmful as that from the centre.

Some research has also made the more fundamental suggestion that the basic assumptions underlying decentralization may need to be rethought. Marginalized or traditional communities may not always share the belief that their collective management of schools is a good thing; that either the schooling or the effort they have to make in sharing responsibility for it 'will pay off'. Even where the aim is limited to the development of local materials, little benefit may be seen by

families at risk. From the perspective of marginalized parents who want a broader world for their children, 'a locally generated curriculum may well fail to meet that criterion' and risks creating 'educational ghettos that end up restricting those who are inside them' (IWGE, 1999, p. 56).

Perspectives and values can change, of course, and effective balances be created. But the task is onerous. Equity will not happen simply by increasing the authority of local leadership to act. It requires support for the development of interactive, transparent and facilitative relationships, within and between the community, the school and the national system. It requires establishing a shared vision, mechanisms for negotiating competing opinions and ways to monitor agreements. Learning is the key to all this, within the school, the education system and the community (Fiske, 1996; Shaeffer, 1994). This includes looking beyond the local leadership to engage directly with the excluded families and provide them with professional support and resources. It also implies a certain degree of caution on the part of national policies and donor advocacy. Misplaced assumptions and inadequately conceived change can leave vulnerable children in a worse situation, with no or weaker schools to attend; fewer, less-motivated and more often absent teachers; and a lower level of knowledge and skills on which to draw.

### **Protecting the most vulnerable**

The above has considered themes related to all children excluded from education. The remainder of the chapter looks more expressly at some of the specific conditions in which children are being put at risk.

#### **Girls**

Within every category of the most seriously excluded, and on all basic human needs dimensions including education, *girls continue to be found at the bottom of the equity ladder*. EFA and the CRC, backed by all other international conferences, focus particularly on girls' education. In consequence, modest advances have been made in providing relevant education to greater numbers. More is now known about the impact of gender discrimination in different cultures and social groups on level participation in education: on access, the nature and quality of learning, and the causes and consequences of exclusion. There have also been gains in overcoming some of the barriers. Though absolute numbers of girls not enrolled or leaving school before completion are still high and growing in too many countries, there has been a small reduction in the percentages.

While the quantitative gains girls have made in education are important, they have perhaps been especially significant in the efforts to make gender-based interventions *integrative*. Most

attempt to draw together a number of development dimensions – health, protection, social learning and participation, social equity. Invariably more holistic than many other types of school reform programme, those for girls' education are finally starting to provide 'an appreciation of the web of constraints and barriers to schooling girls', including often deeply held cultural, religious, social and political values about the roles girls and women should play in society (USAID, 1998, pp. 10–11). Girls bear a double burden in this, since they also face the barriers of all children living in situations of family poverty, inadequate infrastructure, unenforced child labour laws, etc.

In the urgency of dealing with girls' exclusion, some of the traditionally very narrow approaches to promoting effective and equitable education generally are being broken down. Mauritania's newly launched *child-friendly learning environments* programme reflects some of this in addressing several exclusionary realities of education in the country: pedagogically weak and physically uncomfortable schools, low participation rates for girls and, one cause of this, parents' demands for 'higher-quality standards' before allowing daughters to enrol. Though the situation for boys in the Caribbean would suggest that this is not always the case, the programme makes the not unreasonable assumption that in creating a physical and pedagogical environment welcoming to girls, it will effectively create one which is inclusive of all.

The girl-friendly school, then, is defined as 'affordable in cost for the parents and in harmony with their cultural habits, with a canteen to feed them and simple but proper sanitary facilities necessary to Muslim girls of a certain age. . . . A small school garden for teaching pupils to cultivate their own vegetables and diversify their diet, indispensable in this country where malnutrition is nearly always related to a lack in food variety' (UNICEF/Mauritania, 1999). The programme also recognizes the need for community links, working with parents to encourage their taking 'mutual responsibility with teachers' for managing the school, improving its physical environment, supporting the use of child-focused, participatory methods, and creating school co-operatives to generate income.

Another important outcome of such programmes is the confirmation that, while action against the exclusion of girls must be affirmatively emphasized, it cannot be taken in isolation. The imperative is for a broadly inclusive and effective education serving all, including girls. Synergy is again the key: 'the most effective solutions are those that address multiple barriers'; that girls' education programmes work best where they are coherent with their environment and 'fit within a country's national development agenda and strategies'; where they are integrated with overall educational reform; and where 'efforts to improve girls' education [are] owned by a country's citizens . . . by all groups in the society' (USAID, 1998, pp. 11–13). The corollary is that intervention strategies work best where they have built 'linkages, partnerships and means of collaboration' among all implicated actors: civil, public and private; have

encouraged innovation; and focused on making the often hidden life of schools open and available for broad social participation.

Guinea, for example, would appear to be pursuing such a logic in its efforts to turn around the gender gap in its primary schools. Following an analysis of barriers to girls' participation, policies were adopted initiating a national campaign on behalf of girls' education, removing regulations against pregnant girls returning to school and requiring schools to have proper sanitary facilities. While none of these were revolutionary in themselves, when coupled with a general systemic education reform process involving free textbook distribution, teacher training and hiring of more women teachers and school-health interventions, improvements happened. An apparent result has been a rise in girls' enrolment of 16% over the past eight years (World Bank, n.d., p. 2). Similarly, the *home schools programme for girls*, developed on the outskirts of Karachi, is considered in large measure to have succeeded ' . . . by being responsive to their context [by] the programme's structure, flexibility, and ability to respond well to the concrete needs of the local community' (Farzanegan, 1998, p. 62).

Despite the increasing popularity of *incentive programmes*, the verdict is clearly not yet in with respect to their sustainable value in encouraging or rewarding families' more positive attitudes and behaviours towards sending girls to school (Prather et al., 1996, p. 3). For the period they are in place, they can be effective in bringing girls into school. There is also potential for social transformation where the benefits persist long enough to allow girls successfully to complete at least one level. A good experience can 'open the door' to them sending their own daughters to school and, in this sense, incentives can have durable value in helping to break the exclusionary cycle.

As a *strategy* for inclusion, however, incentive programmes are less than effective where they simply fill the gap of socio-economic inequity, as a financial stopgap. They need, at the same time, to make the effort actively to change the poor performance of schools; to engage policy-makers in seriously reassessing the conditions keeping families in poverty; and to encourage families to reconsider value systems that keep girls away from school in the first place.

### Working children and child labour

The issues of working children, especially their more pernicious manifestations as child labour and sexual exploitation, have been at the centre of concern about excluded children throughout the decade. In the various attempts to balance children's learning with their earning a living, fundamentally different philosophies have emerged. Among children's advocates, educators and child-protection services, donors and employers and parents, very different emphases and approaches to intervention have been tried, implicating all sectors and with mixed results.

A culture-based continuum underlies all of these. At one end, the so-called 'eurocentric idea of childhood' holds that children should not work at all and thus that street children and child labourers are 'victims'. At the other is the position that children's work is 'an essential part of community and family membership as well as a means of socialization and education'. In the middle, a somewhat more uncertain view that, while 'cultural context must be respected', culture cannot be the 'trump card' when children need to be protected from harm and their development ensured (*African Contexts . . .*, 1998, Section 3.2.3).

The focus is shifting towards this middle view, to one aimed less at controlling the problem than at helping those children and families involved to make better decisions as to what is in the child's best interest. In line with this, compulsory education as a means of ending at least the most excessive forms of child labour, a mainstay of the post-Jomtien discussion, is waning as 'the' answer. References to the experience of Western countries are proving too muddled by intervening variables to inform policy very usefully. The much-quoted case of Kerala is similarly confounded by the fact that in addition to making education compulsory, it made 'a long-term commitment politically and socially to place a high premium on [it] and 60% of the state budget to support it. Expansion of the school system and the attainment of universal basic primary education . . . to all intents and purposes eliminated child labour . . . particularly its abusive forms' (Suvira, 1994, p. 54). In other words, it was the application of a synergistic model which made the change possible, not legal dictate.

Compulsory education on its own as a regulation is, in any case, far too simplistic. The Philippines in 1993, for example, had a literacy rate of 94% and still large numbers of working children (Suvira, 1994, p. 54). Also, it makes little sense to legally compel parents to send children to schools where facilities are few, teaching is poor and there is no reasonable way to enforce compliance. Making a more enabling environment through the law may be necessary, but needs to be supported by simultaneous and sustained attention to creating public demand for the education of all children, to ensuring quality educational services, and to mobilizing a strong social stigma against work which denies children the chance to learn.

At the most *macro level*, greater and more shared responsibility must be taken by national and international policy and action. Review of global trade practices and monetary policies, measures to alleviate endemic poverty, regulations controlling 'undocumented' worker migration, action on environmental degradation and socio-political conflict – all are critical to ensuring a limit on children having to work and, when they do, that their rights to protection and education are maintained.

Misunderstanding and discrimination underlie much of the negative response to working children, especially to those working on the street. Bringing the facts of these children's

lives, and why they are there, more forcefully into both national and local discussion is becoming an increasingly important line of action. Where national programmes have been effective, they have reflected strong collaboration among major stakeholders: international agencies, national social, industrial and financial policy-makers; factory owners and unions; educators, families and the children themselves. The media have also been important partners. In Brazil, making the incidents, causes and implications of especially exploitative child labour 'publicly visible' has been a core element for action, in conjunction with an All Children in School national mobilization process.

Critical, too, is the initiation of systematic and locally specific processes for remedial and preventative action. One sign of progress in this latter respect has been decentralization, the devolution downwards from the centre to local administrative and community levels. The idea of African mayors as defenders of children underlies the child-friendly Johannesburg Initiative, and provides a good example of mobilizing this type of co-ordinated thinking and action, both to end exploitative child labour and to encourage children into school.

Developed as 'metropolitan programmes of action for children', the aim is to give formal recognition of children's rights to participation and protection (*African Contexts . . .*, 1998, Section 3.3). The six *action points* of the Initiative, developed to implement children's rights at the local level, are equally relevant to an education-based analysis:

- *map* vulnerable groups, as part of a situation analysis of children's exclusion;
- *inventory* local action towards co-ordination and augmentation;
- *set 'doable' goals* for children in a local action plan;
- *disaggregate and monitor* child-focused indicators of disparities;
- *evaluate* actions to chart progress;
- *establish* a local-level policy co-ordination team to follow up cross-sector impact.

As another example of collaborative mixed-level action, support to schools and multi-agency outreach programmes is beginning to prove effective at finding lost children and helping them to rebuild a sense of neighbourhood (IWGE, 1999, p. 68). In the context of the economic crisis in Indonesia, a programme in East Java works with local government, schools, NGOs and the community to identify which families have children who are vulnerable to dropping out or have already done so. It takes remedial action to help them back into school and provides alternative educational opportunities for 'hard-core' children who will never re-enter the formal system (UNICEF/Indonesia, 1999).

Both non-formal and formal approaches clearly need to be at the centre of all such action, and again they need to be linked. Effective programmes have been characterized by their flexibility in breaking down artificial boundaries between formal,

non-formal and work-based learning arrangements, and by their creativity in balancing the learning and earning needs of families and children. They have reduced the 'territoriality tendencies' of schools in opening options for fluid work/study schedules, relevant and responsive curricula and flexible delivery modes. Children who need or want to work have been able to move back and forth between systems considered to be equally valid, rather than one the poor cousin of the other.

Collaboration and integration at local levels also allow the sociocultural dimensions of working children and child labour to be reflected. The multi-partner *alternative basic education* programme for children of seasonal migrant workers in Mexico, for example, establishes learning sites in the camps where the children are; tailors its schedule to dates of harvesting; generates curriculum materials based on the specific indigenous languages of the children and life-stories created by them; and involves children in the management of the classroom through student assemblies. To avoid marginalizing children further by being a 'second-rate poor school for the poor', the programme links with the formal school system. The curriculum is accredited at the first two grade levels (further levels are planned), allowing graduates to move into the regular system as they can.

The dilemma for all programmes concerned with working children is one of balance. It is important that children who want and need to work should be able to do so at levels and in situations where they can still participate in education and be protected from harm. It is also paramount to get children out of exploitative, dangerous labour that denies them a future. The design and management of intervention programmes must be appropriately comprehensive and at the same time realistically doable. A goal encompassing all possible dimensions – elimination of child labour, protection of working children, guaranteed primary-school enrolment and good-quality learning, alternative educational activities and parent involvement – is important in sorting through the full range of implicating factors and actors and ensuring long-term commitment to a broad vision. But evolving a sustainable management agreement on *how actually to work through all of these* is equally critical if those goals are progressively to be realized.

To this end, step-wise plans must be developed for identifying resources, ensuring or creating an enabling legal framework, and undertaking the necessary capacity development for the agencies and individuals involved. All those involved in children's work-related exclusion from education, from employers and schools to parents and children themselves, must grasp the problem as it affects them and as it is within their purview to address.

Families, again, are the core factor in this regard. They urge, sometimes force, children into work; they can equally encourage them into school. Wherever available, they need to

be part of designing and implementing interventions. They should be included as joint learners with their children in programmes for literacy, numeracy and work-skills, and in learning better 'family-living' skills. Many – single parents (especially teenage girls), parents with HIV/AIDS, families involved with drugs or domestic abuse – may also need support in developing capacities to manage and protect themselves in the face of limited resources and hostile environments. Many street children have support groups beyond their families, often other children. These groups also count and can be among the strongest bases for peer-managed learning programmes. NGOs, often created from current or former working children as well as social workers and educators, are also critical delivery channels for education. Employers, as users of children's services, are also required participants if the fire is to be put out and not just prevented (IWGE, 1999, p. 66). Engaging them in the development (and resource support) of on-site education programmes is sometimes the only way of realizing an effective learning-while-earning balance.

Children themselves must be the central participants in any effort to define the 'problem' and determine 'solutions'. It is important to acknowledge the legitimacy of their motives for being where they are. In terms of education, these children must also have a say about their interest, need and availability for learning (Lowry, 1997, p. 1). Many are already learning and doing so fairly well, given their ability to survive in extremely difficult, uncertain and dangerous conditions. The onus is on education systems and schools to encourage them to engage in learning that will help them to live with more stability and safety in society, to contribute to that society and to gain more of its benefits.

Unfortunately, it appears that mainstream education communities do not know enough about how children in these circumstances would like, or are able, to engage with organized learning. According to the International Working Group on Education (IWGE) consultation, many ministries of education in fact do not care to know, tending 'to disassociate themselves from the problem of disadvantaged groups in general, and street children in particular, simply *because they do not regard themselves as responsible for children who are not actually in school*' (IWGE, 1999, p. 67, italics added). The CRC requires, however, that they do become knowledgeable towards reaching *all* children, including these groups. More case studies, longitudinal analyses and programme-based action research are clearly crucial if 'seamless education opportunities' are to be created to support working children (and to lessen the pressure on others to start).

'Meet and move' is perhaps the main overall message for programmes aimed at securing the safety and development of all these children: *meet them where they are* in terms of their own priorities and capacities and *help them to move forward*. Educational interventions 'must be conceived to arouse a desire for learning . . . opportunities for experiential learning

embedded in activities which present solutions to concrete needs' (Lowry, 1997, p. 8). Brazil's Projeto Axe *pedagogy of desire* attempts such an approach in encouraging these children 'to dream and wish' and offering 'concrete opportunities to help the child realize those dreams' (UNICEF, 1997a, p. 57). Reading and mathematics are coupled with work that is creative and skills-producing. The programme seeks to match the sense of adventure children can often find in the streets, and that which is at the base of most effective learning. 'Life on the streets is risky, but also fascinating. . . . These kids are used to risk. Here, we create positive risks and challenges'.

### Children in war

In seeking to create inclusive and enabling learning environments for all children, of particular and increasing importance is the situation of those children and adolescents *in conflict and at war*. The 1999 Johannesburg Sub-Saharan Africa Conference was unequivocal in expressing the urgency for African countries to make peace a priority. Communal violence and war, and the policies of exclusion, racism, marginalization, discrimination and militarism which underlie them, are killing people and economies at an alarming pace in the region. Education systems, and children's access to them, are being undermined in equal measure.

In turn, education systems have a fundamental role to play in addressing the crisis. They need to give immediate and genuine attention to strengthening community, student and teacher capacities for co-operation, intercultural communication and conflict resolution. They need to help address 'the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflict and violence, whether overt or structural, from the interpersonal level to the societal and global . . .' (Fountain, 1999, p. 3).

Though still rare, various forms of *peace education* are being developed towards promoting the attitudinal and behavioural change required to realize this end. Helping students to develop better awareness and knowledge about the core issues of peace and peacefulness is seen as a way of developing shared values and norms. Internalization of relevant analytical and social skills in areas such as interest negotiation and conflict resolution is being supported through teaching children about their own and others' rights and responsibilities and providing concrete opportunities to test these ideas. A role-play programme in Mauritius, for example, asks students to act as lawyers to resolve conflict on the use of first language in the classroom, or on children wanting to go to work instead of school. A psychosocial healing programme in Croatia trains head teachers and psychologists to support classroom teachers in facilitating rehabilitation and promoting conflict resolution (Fountain, 1999, pp. 7, 12). By helping children to develop ways in which to deal with discrimination or abuse in their own contexts, peace education programmes aim to strengthen their capacities to prevent, or at least limit, their own exclusion.

In a related way, *global education* focuses on children's development of knowledge and skills for living peacefully and effectively as '... citizens who demonstrate tolerance of, and respect for, people of other cultures, faiths and world views, and who have an understanding of global issues and trends'. Global education is concerned with promoting capacity and guiding behaviour change through more learner-oriented curriculum design, school management and teaching methods. It recognizes that 'children learn best when encouraged to explore and discover for themselves and when addressed as individuals with a unique cluster of beliefs, experiences and talents' (*Middle East Global Education Handbook*, 1999, p. 5). There is a clear emphasis on 'acquiring the skills, abilities and knowledge needed to cope with life' and presumably to act, where appropriate, to change it. 'Learning to learn and thereby learning to solve problems . . .' is the core issue (Dall, Introduction to Pike and Selby, n.d., p. 2). In all of this, global education is also closely related to the child-friendly school concept.

Grac'a Machel's mid-decade study, carried out under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General, was critical in bringing the issue of *children as soldiers and their exploitation as victims of war* on to the global agenda. While there is clearly a very long way to go in changing the situations causing and sustaining the conflicts, the importance of systematic efforts to link education and child protection within their contexts is becoming much clearer. More, and more effective, strategies and collaboration are critical to mitigate the effects of war and post-war trauma, principally those which support recovery and reintegration of children into family and community settings in ways that re-establish their self-worth, confidence and ability to learn.

The emerging concept of 'permanent emergencies' (IBE, 1997, p. 11), basically that an enduring conflict is a feature of exclusion, is important here. It suggests a necessary blurring of the line between emergency and development, in situations of pre-, mid- and post-conflict, when considering impact on children. In this perspective, it is related to the position of the peace educators that 'peace does not merely imply the absence of overt violence . . . but also encompasses the presence of social, economic and political justice' (Fountain, 1999, p. 3). Structural violence, reflecting a situation in which such conditions of justice are not available for marginal communities, is a key condition of the wars that eventually follow. In this way, it is one of the critical disabling factors that must be included as a sign of children's exclusion – from development in general as well as from education. It reinforces the idea that inclusion in relation to conflict is not a short-term concept, or goal. Rather it must be set along a continuum of learning which aims at *preventing* harm, *promoting* development and *enabling* sustained integration.

The implications for education systems are significant. Ways need to be found to allow children and young people in pre-, post- and mid-war situations to stabilize their social relation-

ships, manage their basic needs and generate resources. It is especially critical in these situations that the barriers come down between types of educational content, delivery methods and facilitators. Children and adolescents must be allowed easy and facilitated access to the knowledge and skills they need. They must be provided with the 'zone of peace' necessary to engage in learning. The position of adolescents is especially vulnerable in this respect (Machel, 1996, Para. 32). They are the ones who have probably experienced the greatest traumas, as child fighters and victims of rape and other abuses. They are the ones who have to deal with the transition not just of war to peace, but from child to adult, creating yet more pressure for high-risk behaviours in terms of work, drugs, sexual behaviour, or use of violence. They are also typically the children least well understood by families or education systems with respect to the 'special needs and special strengths' they bring to enabling their own learning and recovery.

Again, wherever possible, educational interventions need to be made within the immediate context of children's families or primary caregivers, and the community within which they are most likely to stay through the reintegration period. 'Children's well-being is best ensured through family and community-based solutions [based on] local cultures and drawn from an understanding of child development' (Machel, 1996, Para. 32). Educational interventions must also take into account the needs of these adults for learning as they adapt to an often very different post-conflict situation of work, governance and social relations. This last includes relations with their children, especially where they have been involved with actual fighting; '... families are also worn down by conflict, both physically and emotionally, and face increased impoverishment ... links between education, vocational opportunities for former child combatants and the economic security of their families. These are most often the determinants of successful social reintegration' (Machel, 1996, Para. 53).

Education in the context of armed conflict has a clear role in helping children to normalize their lives, maintain and re-establish peer relationships, improve self-esteem and find work (Machel, 1996, Para. 54). One example of an integrative programme strategy aimed at doing this is the *accelerated learning project* in Liberia. Implemented as a component of its overall Back to School Initiative and the broader context of school rebuilding and textbook distribution, teacher training, girls' education and life-skills programming, it seeks to encourage war-excluded children to come to school. The aim is to get them as quickly as possible to their appropriate education level through a 'compressed' six-year primary curriculum done in three years. It assumes that children will move quickly, given their motivation and readiness, being older and more experienced, and given teachers' ability to teach for skills competencies rather than follow a pre-set curriculum with small class size. It also assumes being able to attract good leadership and mobilize community interest and support. The question remains as to whether initiating the work through

limited pilot projects will provide sufficient perspective for determining feasibility, but there appear to be signs of progress (despite an unfortunate reluctance among some donors to collaborate).

There is no choice in the serious efforts that must be made to create appropriately child-friendly and inclusive education programmes in situations as desperate as these. Traditional approaches do not apply; flexibility, responsiveness, collaboration and effectiveness must be the defining criteria. While Machel correctly cautions about the need to ensure that methods are tailored to fit the cultures of the communities involved, active and participatory learning, group discussion and problem-solving, peer support and child-to-child arrangements have been successful in most cultures. Initiatives such as the *gardens of peace* in countries as diverse as Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia hold strong potential for facilitating holistic and integrative learning. These initiatives need to be more fully analysed and shared.

The Palestinian Tamer Institute is creating learning environments for children which 'emphasize the importance of personal and collective self-expression as a way of transforming their suffering into hope, and developing in them resilience and an ability to come to terms' with their situation (UNICEF/MENARO, 1998, presentation by A. Nasser). Weekly journals are used by older children as forums of self-expression to raise issues of common concern 'and even challenge policy-makers to constructive dialogue'. Drama helps to 'alleviate and deal with violence'. Dialogue and discussion circles help young children to 'tolerate and respect each others' views and bridge their differences'. Such approaches ensure a focus based directly on the experiences, learning capacity and interests children bring with them. Linkage is again the key, and it is important that ways be found to give greater public value to such non-formal activities, and to incorporate them into the formal system.

Other types of innovation are being developed. The UNESCO/UNICEF teacher emergency pack and 'school-in-a-box' are examples. These are being used in other programmes, such as UNICEF's *child-friendly spaces* programme in Kosovo, an attempt to provide returning and displaced children 'with a sense of normalcy crucial to their psychological recovery and social integration' (Wulf, n.d., p. 5).

As with all educational programmes set within the context of humanitarian emergencies, these must be based on the specifics of their situation; the degree of 'structuredness' appropriate to the children involved (their physical, emotional and livelihood needs, their capacities, age and gender); to the physical environment (persistence of the violence or environmental degradation); to the resources available; and to the expected duration and trajectory of the emergency. In all cases, the fundamentals will be the same: teaching which is child-based and, as much as possible, negotiated with families in ways which facilitate re-engagement, nurturing and tolerance; and which is

flexible and pedagogically effective, ensuring intellectual development, physical and emotional well-being and viable survival and coping strategies (UNICEF, n.d.). All this, of course, makes the training and support of teachers once again a critical matter, '... to reconfirm their own personal safety and professional confidence, including how most effectively to work with children who are suffering trauma' (Machel, 1996, Para. 55).

### Indigenous children

As discussed above, indigenous communities are particularly fragile within the spectrum of excluded communities. Not only are they excluded by the fact of their history and culture (children of nomadic tribes in the Sudan, for example, face exclusion simply by living the traditional life), they are susceptible to further risk by the very interventions intended to support and include them. It is especially important for these communities that the educational interventions directed at them seek *with vigour* to be community-based, interactive and genuinely participatory; that they be based on local culture, development priorities and social context.

The degree of risk posed to these communities by interventions is directly proportional to the extent of exclusion they are already facing. The more they are unique and the greater their isolation, the wider will be the communication gap between them and outside agents; the less their margin for experimentation; and the more limited their capacity or willingness to say 'no' to the innovations – especially where these are presented as ways to make the life of their children significantly better. Excluding actions are often subtle and unintended, conveyed in projects based on foreign cultural paradigms which, in turn, guide the way that questions are asked, problems are defined, and options are identified. The CRC makes it an imperative for governments to take the initiative in bringing education to where such communities are; it is less clear about the best, most protective, route for getting there.

There are, however, some indicators. A decade-long programme of primary-school curriculum development in Canada undertaken jointly by an aboriginal community and a university began with the assumption of equity in values and culture, but also with an agreement that one side was more equal than the other. The fundamental goal was for a curriculum that would maintain and strengthen the integrity of the *indigenous* culture. Professional pedagogical principles, the Western cultural input, were necessary, but not sufficient and not first. Partnership began with creating a mutual 'vision' statement: 'it will be the children who inherit the struggle to retain and enhance the people's culture, language and history; who continue the quest for economic progress for a better quality of life; and who move forward with strengthened resolve to plan their own identity' (Pence, 1999, p. 3). Around this core, community elders and leaders, teachers, students and education specialists, 'generated' a teacher-education and school-based curriculum. Content and methodology blended

local and external values, modern sector and traditional knowledge, male and female, young and old. The generative process is to continue; the curriculum will evolve as it is applied, as people and conditions change, and as new learning emerges.

### Children with disabilities

Supporting the right to education, and protecting the best interests, of *children with disabilities* is complicated by the fact that many of the most serious challenges rest not with them, but with the society and education systems that fail to provide them with the opportunities to which they are entitled. The *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (1994), reiterating the CRC and EFA, made explicit the right of children to education irrespective of any particular support for their learning which might be required. It confirmed the importance of all children being able to participate in the mainstream of schooling on the basis of their strengths, while at the same time having the implications of any impediments to their learning mitigated.

The conception of an inclusive education is an overarching one, implying a change of mindset and expectations towards opening education to *all* children. The Mozambique Government and the Palestinian National Authority, for example, have adopted as a principle the inclusion of excluded groups in education sector programmes. As a principle, it needs to become much more prominent, and actively applied, in all countries. Its basic criterion is that schools conform to the characteristics of the child, and not vice versa. It affirms action on behalf of children in direct correlation to their and their families' need for outreach. It gives special attention to child-to-child strategies: children of different ages, learning styles and capacities working as pairs or in groups to ensure everyone's positive involvement. It includes home-linkages, through visiting teachers, community resource people and portable learning packages. In Saudi Arabia, inclusion is being addressed through the use of special resource rooms, specialist teachers assigned to work with mainstream classrooms, 'mobile teachers' to provide training to schools in ways of managing integration, and consultant teachers who give advice and guidance on a referral basis.

Discrimination of any kind is very much a function of culture and individual perspective. Exclusion from education on the basis of disability is less a matter of any actual inability to learn as of a belief that certain types of people cannot learn and need not be helped to try. Action against such exclusion, then, needs to be understood within the context of the professional and community belief systems that maintain it. Actions to include affected children need to work at changing these perceptions from within these systems, through provision of more accurate information, opportunities to test ideas, examples of effective strategies. Labelling is an especially sensitive matter in this context. It is important to recognize that



children with special needs or disabilities are not all 'of a kind' in the needs and capacities they bring to their learning. Social policies and education systems (and especially teachers) need to have sufficiently sensitive ways of knowing who the children are needing extra support, on what basis they need it and what specifically that support should be.

Too broad or nebulous an approach to assessing children leads *both* to too many children being labelled deficient, and thus denied regular access to school; *and* to too many with special needs being overlooked, and thus denied access to appropriate support. In both cases, children are without resources appropriate to their effective learning. Backsliding in the progress made to ensure constructive definitions of children's special learning needs, as expressed by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, is important to note. The Association is concerned about apparent moves by education ministries both to discourage teachers from requesting assessments because systems 'cannot provide the services', and to 'de-label' students with special needs, to refer not to learning *disabilities*, but to learning *differences*. Because only the former is recognized under the Canadian Human Rights Act, it is less easy for parents to make a case of denied access to effective education (Campbell, 1999, pp. 1, 6).

On the other hand, attaching a deficit-defining label to children is equally damaging in allowing systems to justify their exclusion. It becomes a particularly dangerous approach when the label, and exclusion from regular school access, are too loosely applied to children of ethnic minorities, indigenous communities or others who are seen as 'different'. There is risk in labelling when what is seen as 'adaptive and "intelligent" in one culture, can be [seen as] maladaptive and even "unintelligent" in another' (Sternberg, cited in Franklin, 1992, p. 116). Exclusion into sometimes lower-quality special education risks being used as 'the primary solution for . . . learners whose cognitive and behavioural patterns are incompatible with schools' monocultural instructional methods' (Franklin, 1992, p. 116). Thus, for example, Romany children in some European countries are over-represented in special needs institutions, and noteworthy by their non-participation in regular classrooms where they are culturally and linguistically a minority (Ainscow and Haile-Giorgis, 1998, pp. 20, 24).

In a similar way, child sex-workers and war-injured children are often not encouraged to resume their education where their behaviour is seen as disruptive, and emotionally traumatized children are kept away on the pretext of being unable to learn. What is indisputable is that schools and societies need to accept responsibility for ensuring that there are no children who 'do not fit'; that exclusion is understood not as a function of the 'impairment of an individual, but . . . a socially created barrier to participation'. In-service teacher education and specifically tailored curriculum materials can help to increase their familiarity with children's different types of learning styles and capacities, strengthen their sense of confidence in being

able to work with them and allow them the room they need to manage their own learning (UNESCO/ICF-EFA, 1998b, p. 7).

### Children with HIV/AIDS

As an example of children with special needs, children affected by HIV/AIDS are perhaps uniquely at risk. Either as affected or infected, these children and youth are vulnerable at all points in their lives, including their relationship with the school: how they are treated there and under what conditions they are able to stay. HIV/AIDS creates fear, discrimination and exclusion. Affected children are forced into sporadic or non-attendance by having to assume responsibility for family income and childcare.

In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS is wiping out all education gains. As one participant at the Johannesburg 1999 Conference put it, 'the pre- and post-AIDS world are not the same world; they constitute a shift in paradigm'. In areas of Kenya, 52% of children orphaned by AIDS are not in school, compared with 2% of non-AIDS orphans. In Malawi, 10% of education personnel had died of AIDS by 1997. Rates of infection of more than 30% are reported among teachers in three southern African countries.

As the socio-economic crisis of HIV/AIDS grows, school and education systems have no option but to become consciously and energetically part of the solution for children. This includes support for the human resource capacities of families of affected children, as well as for the children themselves. Non-formal, community-based and formal education programmes are needed to work together in strengthening the capacity of those affected to adapt to the psychosocial, work and home-management changes confronting them. They are needed to help children to develop the knowledge and skills to access support networks, those which can give them guidance in dealing with the health aspects of the infection, but also with the human rights and ethical dilemmas related to issues such as expulsion from school or denial of medical care. One clear message coming out of the AIDS crisis is that *any* justification for the segmentation of education systems is no longer tenable. Countries, communities and children cannot afford it.

Somewhat unique to the widening circle of the HIV/AIDS crisis, one particular 'learning group' for such interventions so far largely ignored are the grandparents of AIDS-affected children. As parents become ill and die, their children are increasing being left with older relatives who often know little about AIDS, have limited experience with social services agencies and schools, and are less capable or comfortable in dealing with them. Many are not able or willing to counsel or manage these grandchildren, to urge them to go to school or to teach them at home. Adults can, of course, learn and again the family focus matters. It is a question of reaching out to them using methods appropriate to their own educational and work experience, in a language and format that they can understand and with which they can engage.

Programmes of continuing in-service teacher support are also critical, both for experienced teachers facing burn-out and for new ones who may have been incompletely prepared in the rush to replace staff who leave. Curriculum designs and contents need to be flexible and responsive. They need to provide a 'basket' of learning opportunities to affected children, to reflect the increasing randomness with which they can participate in school. Ever-younger children need to receive an education that provides basic life and livelihood management capacities. Transition and out-of-school classes; more educative childcare programmes and youth clubs; child-to-child and peer-learning initiatives; collaboration with local private-sector agencies to create apprenticeship arrangements, are some of the actions being developed to address this widening range of demands on the system. ■

## Moving forward: debates, challenges, lessons

Nothing short of a renewed and massive political will at the national and international levels to invest in people and their well-being will achieve the objectives of social development (*Copenhagen Declaration, 1995, Para. 82*).

### Debates

Nothing less will achieve the objectives of education for all. The basic *question* of exclusion is simple enough: 'why is it that schools throughout the world fail to teach so many children successfully?' (UNICEF, 1998a, p. 52). Beyond saying that societies are not trying hard enough, the *answers* are not so simple. Exclusion is a layered phenomenon. Underlying conditions keep children out: poverty, discrimination, communal violence. Systemic factors push them out: unsafe and insecure schools, unqualified or unmotivated teachers, inflexible schedules and irrelevant curricula. Individual and family situations hold them back: values or other priorities that push formal education aside.

While progress has been made since Jomtien in extending the quality and scope of education to many children, progress for excluded children seems to be only marginal. The questions at least are clearer, and by extending the decade the world has given itself more time to try to answer them. Four of the more persistent threads of debate are as follows.

*Focusing directly on excluded children and/or more broadly on the disabling causal conditions.* Programmes allowing participation by specific at-risk children or making specific schools child-friendly reduce exclusion. While important, however, their impact is limited in numbers and durability. Action to strengthen tertiary education 'to absorb and exploit global knowledge and new technologies' (DFID, 1999, p. 16) might lead to countries reducing poverty levels, but is likely to miss those outside the development paradigm. Strengthening meso-level education bureaucracies, teacher training and curriculum development can improve the quality of schools and promote public support for education-for-all goals. Helping schools to become more effectively 'ready' to reach out and welcome children of all backgrounds and to work collaboratively with parents is critical. Such actions, however, require major commitments of resources; they also take time which excluded children do not really have. The three levels are on a continuum, of course. All points along it must be held accountable and action needs to be simultaneous and systemic.

*Creating higher-quality and accessible formal school systems and/or broadening the framework to recognize early childhood and non-formal programmes as integral parts of an expanded vision.* Better schools with better teaching and more relevant content will draw in and retain more students who will be more successful. They will not, however, reach all children. Indigenous children, those living in absolute poverty or working, children affected by HIV/AIDS – all these will continue to find it difficult or undesirable to participate. The CRC confirms their right to an effective education, but neither family nor national budgets, professional expertise or system flexibility, are limitless. Priorities need to be negotiated and equitable alternatives developed. There are conditions: the promotion and sustaining of multiple linkages between out-of-school education and the formal system; children in non-formal programmes cannot be left as also-rans, disconnected from the chance to benefit from and contribute to their society. This means ensuring an equitable status for each type of provision, and rationalizing the use of the overall resources available to them.

*Intervening through national-level advocacy and/or through direct context-specific action with families and communities.* International and national advocacy, strongly, coherently and consistently expressed, is critical in getting the education rights of excluded children on to national agendas; they sometimes prompt action. Experience shows very clearly, however, that no substantive or sustainable change in the vulnerability of children, in their protection, development or learning, is possible without their and their families' genuine participation in defining and acting on the matter as they see it. Ending exclusionary education requires education to end exclusion: providing opportunities, resources and communication channels for families and communities to learn and, through that learning, to develop the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to push for a change in the quality of education available to their children. The causes of exclusion are systemic and interdependent; so too must be efforts to address them. The two sides must come together.

*Working within closely controlled, well-resourced pilot programmes and/or venturing directly on to the level of open-ended, real-life 'scale'.* Pilot programmes test strategies and build models to sell proven products for national application. This aim is rarely realized in the context of exclusion, however, because systemic causes are rarely confronted. Shifting the paradigm, to apply facilitated and participatory processes 'at scale' from the outset, challenges project-based traditions and may better address the social and institutional barriers to inclusion. It is also high in risk, time and labour. Education systems and donors need to learn to accommodate the pace and irregular trajectory of genuine, systemic change through long-term and flexible human and financial resource commitments. Piloting should be short-term and catalytic. Plans must be made and steps taken from the outset to integrate the new approaches into the mainstream for the long term. Current

attempts by national governments and donors to use sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) are one means of combining pilots with more permanent interventions. Gradual and often frustrating as these approaches are, they are in principle the strategies sensitive and responsive enough to reach the hard to reach.

There is no one 'right' answer to any of these debates. There are, however, some clear directions. Experience since Jomtien has shown that no single policy, strategy or design can effectively address so complex an issue as exclusion. Necessary, however, are:

- an *unambiguous and persistent policy commitment* to ending exclusion, in all sectors directly and indirectly touching family and child security;
- *continuous, relevant and sufficient support* to meeting the learning needs and matching the learning capacities of at-risk children and their families, over the long term; and
- *flexible application and adaptation* of programmes and resources, based on locally set priorities.

Another key word throughout is **focus**: to *concentrate resources, research and advocacy* directly on the children most at risk and vulnerable, in the most marginalized and poverty-burdened families, and in the most fragile socio-economic regions and countries.

## Challenges

The Jomtien decade has made some notable progress in realizing the goals of 2000. But results are 'very mixed globally. . . . [In] many of the most under-enrolled countries, the barriers against school attendance have not been breached' and there have been both reverses in poorer African countries and diminished advancements in others (McGrath, 1999, pp. 69–70). Children continue to be pushed out of 'dilapidated classrooms [with] gloomy-looking teachers' with no resources. The involvement and participation of communities 'is not a frequent sight'. Little 'dynamism' is being shown for bringing about 'drastic changes' implied by the 'visions of Jomtien to reduce inequality and to emphasize student learning and teaching interaction' (Habte, 1999, 53–4).

In extending the EFA deadline another fifteen years, the Amman Meeting of 1996 gave the world more time. It also acknowledged the world's failure to respect the right of all children to an education. In effect, the new deadline of 2015 legitimizes the loss of another generation. In addition to debates, then, there are challenges.

*Deal seriously with poverty.* There is no escaping the fact that, wherever and whoever else they are, the vast majority of chronically and intergenerationally excluded children are those living in poverty. They are children whose families live without the minimum resources necessary to meet their basic needs or to

exercise 'investment choices' (e.g. for health and education). They struggle to survive without the political influence to change their situation. Where other exclusionary conditions obtain – disability, cultural and linguistic difference, migration or inadequate school quality – families without resources cannot create, find or move to educational alternatives.

Poverty precludes options. It is an all-encompassing social, economic and health phenomenon. It means personal and community disempowerment. Families and communities living in poverty can work to make the education available to their children better. These improvements will remain fragile and short-lived, however, until the surrounding conditions of endemic poverty are addressed. Inequitable distribution of development benefits and the rights of governance are at the core of education exclusion. So-called 'soft solutions' – non-formal programmes, NGO mechanisms, allowance for private schools – can be useful. They will never be more than transitory adjustments unless there is structural change.

*Make the affected children visible.* When children are simply 'missing' from the system, there is no pressure to take action. When their absence is known, but the causes and consequences are not, there is little to ensure that effective actions are taken. *Maps of exclusion* need to be created and maintained. These are 'moving pictures' of the changing incidence and patterns of vulnerable families and children. Poverty is the most consistent predictor of systemic and endemic exclusion, but is rarely used by national education strategies (DFID, 1999, p. 4).

Initiatives such as that of the Canadian School Boards Association *Poverty Intervention Profile* (1999), in providing a formative self-analysis tool for boards and schools to identify where poverty is in their communities and what they are doing about it, suggest ways to generate such cumulative pictures for action at an appropriate level. Additionally, exclusion mapping needs to look at patterns of racial and ethnic ghettoizing, the continuum of children's school/labour patterns, disease and disability distribution, environmental pollution, etc. All these factors or conditions indicate where exclusion is, or probably will be, happening. Both national and local systems need to be proactive in locating, exposing and acting on them – not simply to overhaul the dysfunctional schools they produce.

*Generate better analyses of what is happening in the field.* Closely linked to the preceding point, such analyses are crucial. The actions and results of government programmes and the various NGO and out-reach initiatives essentially remain black boxes in terms of the difference they are making to exclusion. Little is known about what is happening inside the box, about who and how many are being reached, and with what impact; 'most reports never tell us how few children the projects reach – as compared with the need' (UNICEF/ESARO, 1999). Insufficient is known, too, of where there is need for improvement or revision; or where there might be potential for collaboration with, or adoption by, other systems.

Concerning the issue of missing children, there is growing evidence to suggest that much of the funding and programming intended to support the poorest families and children does not in fact reach them, or reaches them in forms that they cannot effectively use. Interventions conceptualized and delivered in paradigms of the middle class and/or modern sector tend to be appropriated by those who understand these paradigms. To whom resources move, and how they move, and why they miss their intended beneficiaries, are gaps in knowledge about exclusion which mirror gaps in coverage of the excluded. None will be effectively closed until evidence of the scope of exclusion is accurately known and displayed, publicly and dramatically.

*Make analyses participatory.* Statistics on national and global enrolment and persistence rates and NGO out-of-school activities are important, but insufficient. They reveal little about what is happening in classrooms or in the lives of the most vulnerable children. Exclusion will persist as long as children and their families are denied an effective voice in defining and changing it. Action must build from their perspectives, and the speed, direction and evaluation of that action must be determined by them. Interveners have an ethical responsibility for the security and well-being of those whom they seek to change. Participatory assessment of impact is one of the best ways of ensuring this.

*Make the framework wide enough.* Causes and consequences of exclusion extend well beyond education systems. They must be sought, understood and acted on beyond these parameters, within the barriers to children's access imposed by policies and actions across all sectors. Education must recognize its role as part of the broader policy and governance system to confront and change conditions that create vulnerability and exclusion. Education systems must recognize and act on their responsibility both to end their own exclusionary practices and to end the exclusion of children and youth from the wider society, through advocacy, sustained and articulate input to public policy, and community mobilization. Teachers' unions and principals' associations have a particular role here. Too often, they organize along narrow lines of their own security, without serving as the voice of systemic and social reform.

*Focus and co-ordinate action.* Exclusion will persist, and vulnerable children will continue to fall through the cracks, as long as education systems are divided among donors, responses are fragmented and interventions remain isolated from each other and from the wider policy and programme environment. Traditional limitations and lines of separation applied between formal and non-formal, classroom-based and out-of-school learning, need to be dropped. The same is true in dealing with children's varying learning needs. The latter is a core concern of the UNESCO-EFA World Education Forum initiatives to blend inclusive education into the broader EFA framework, for example the search for fuller partnership with interventions such as UNICEF's 'child-friendly schools' and NGO education programmes for youth and adults with special learning needs.

*Face the challenge – exhibit the passion.* Those with the power to precipitate change are morally liable to take serious stock of their own organizing principles and operational assumptions, and to adapt or replace them as needed. Donors, governments and international NGOs must all ask serious questions about their political will. The comment that ‘most of the children in Africa could be described as disadvantaged’ (IWGE, 1999, p. 53) is unacceptable.

The CRC requires policy-makers and interveners in both international and national communities to be dynamic and forthcoming in assessing the quality of the work they are doing, the vacuums they are leaving, and the gaps they are filling with respect specifically to excluded children and their families. They need to examine the quality, strength and consistency of the leadership they are showing on behalf of these communities. National governments, in particular, are obligated to look at their spending priorities: to whose agenda they are listening (children rarely rank high among lobbyists); on what they are spending national resources; and to what extent they are using ‘community empowerment’ as a euphemism for abdication of responsibility.

### **Lessons from good practice**

The keys to meeting the challenges of exclusion are to start and sustain change with serious, coherent and comprehensive commitment. Universalizing education access and quality is not a matter of waiting to get it all ‘right’. Such a position is unrealistic in any development enterprise; it is untenable in situations of exclusion. Declaring the problem to be unresolvable and doing nothing is equally untenable.

The case of **Himachal Pradesh** in northern India is perhaps well known. It none the less provides a useful benchmark to end this discussion because it is doing what theory and ‘best practice’ experience say must be done to reverse the exclusionary cycle. Against the odds of endemic poverty and socio-geographic marginalization from most of the benefits of India’s development, it is succeeding in reducing exclusion. *Children are going to school and learning because succeeding at education is a highly interactive process and, in Himachal Pradesh, the elements of the interaction are being made to work on behalf of children rather than against them.*

In this situation, ‘a sound infrastructure and responsible administration have averted the sense of discouragement and powerlessness so common elsewhere. Parents find that their efforts to educate their children are rewarded and teachers are given the means to teach properly. These favourable conditions tend to feed on each other’ (PROBE, 1999, p. 126). Adding to this “cycle of virtue”, other social services in the state appear to be handled well; inclusion is part of a web reaching beyond just education.

- Reiterating the framing theme of this paper, the various ‘enabling conditions’ of education revealed through the Himachal Pradesh case can be divided into three broad categories: *characteristics of the families and children* in their attitudes about, expectations from and commitment to, learning;
- *characteristics of the school, its teachers and curriculum*, and their responsibility for ensuring quality, relevance and a safe/secure environment; and
- *characteristics of the state government* in the policies it creates and how it implements them.

Advocacy and intervention must build on and promote the creation and strengthening of precisely these factors.

*Families, children and the community.* Children in Himachal Pradesh are enthusiastic about school and their classroom experiences. They ‘have ambitious plans for the future . . . even [the] girls . . .’ (PROBE, 1999, p. 119).

**Lesson:** Children themselves need to be engaged explicitly in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their lives at school and the value of education to them. It cannot be assumed that their priorities will be the same as their adult interlocutors. They are likely to disengage, physically or intellectually, where they feel uncomfortable, lost or that they are wasting their time. The opposite is also true.

‘Most parents [in Himachal Pradesh] take it for granted that schooling is an essential part of every child’s upbringing and have ambitious hopes for their own children’s education. Their reasons . . . show a broader understanding of the value of education’, including its value as a means of allowing participation in social and political issues as well as making a better living (ibid., p. 117).

‘. . . when schools started springing up in their own village, [Himachal Pradesh parents] promptly seized this new opportunity for their children’ (ibid., p. 123).

‘[Himachal Pradesh] parents tend to have a responsible and supportive attitude towards their children’s schooling. Education ranks up high among their spending priorities. . . . At home, children’s studies receive much attention . . . they tend to have a fairly supportive attitude towards teachers [there is] mutual co-operation’ (ibid., p. 119).

‘One key link in this virtuous circle [of improved schooling] has been parental education’ (ibid., p. 126).

**Lesson:** Parents must be recognized as capable adults who care for their children and are inclined to try to make the most efficacious decisions for them and the family as a whole. This will usually include seeking an education appropriate to their situation and likelihood of success. Policy and programme interventions need to work directly and collaboratively with

parents in ways which take into account their constraints, strengths and aspirations; encourage them to see and seek value in education for all their children and for themselves; and motivate their engagement with the school in assuring good quality.

**Lesson:** Ensure corollary attention to adult education, including support to interventions on good parenting, functional literacy and numeracy, work-related skills training, and basic education equivalency programmes. Parents who have not experienced success in their own education, or who are preoccupied with their inability to manage the household, care for children and make a decent income, are much less likely to become energetic supporters of their children's education where their own learning needs are not met.

In Himachal Pradesh, the 'relatively homogeneous nature of the village society [leaves] scope for a sense of village solidarity' and development of social norms for schooling. It 'fosters the notion that the local school is *everyone's* school . . . if the school stops functioning, the whole village community has a stake in solving the problem'. The sense of solidarity has also proved important in allowing for shared potential of benefit from school; if someone gets a good job, all feel it could happen to them regardless of caste, giving 'a sense of possibility' to the whole community (ibid., p. 124).

In Himachal Pradesh, 'parental vigilance, as an accountability mechanism, takes a conspicuous form from time to time'. Much of this happens informally, and complements other community-based co-operation such as women's group discussions of education issues (ibid., p. 124).

**Lesson:** Build on the existing communal attitudes and mechanisms available among families and other community agencies. Where these are not strong, it is important to facilitate their development through support to community learning activities — through focus groups, neighbourhood organizations, parent-school associations, etc.

'Himachal Pradesh parents . . . have ambitious educational goals even for girls. . . . The gender bias in school attendance is very low at the primary level and rapidly declining at the upper-primary level. Educational aspirations for girls are high. . . .' The reasons are not just for marriage, but also for improving job prospects ' . . . reflecting the high involvement of Himachal women in employment outside the home' (ibid., p. 118).

In Himachal Pradesh, ' . . . the passion for education . . . is widely shared. People consider schooling important not only for their own children but for all children' (ibid., p. 117).

**Lesson:** Identify and address especially the attitudinal factors which serve to exclude or diminish participation by specific children within the community. Gender will be the key factor,

but disabilities, minority cultures and linguistic groups must be taken into account. Work broadly with the community to remove barriers, promote action and build social consensus in support of education, including advocacy about the importance of learning, and stimulate conditions (such as employment opportunities) which demonstrate its benefits.

*The school and its teachers.* Himachal Pradesh classrooms are visibly active; there is a sense of professionalism evident among staff – with functioning classes, few teacher absences or children left on their own, good student attendance and progress records. Teacher inertia is rare. They show ' . . . a responsible attitude towards school duties'; 'an unusual degree of commitment to the progress of their pupils. Genuine interest in pedagogy. . . . Generally, the organization of a school [is] oriented to the needs of pupils as much as to the convenience of teachers' (ibid., p. 120).

In Himachal Pradesh, commitments by staff and students keep schools well-maintained and utilized, 'usually tidy [with] much less dilapidation', and female teachers (almost half of the teaching population) feel generally safe/secure (ibid., p. 121).

**Lesson:** Give priority in all policy and programme interventions needed to ensure the quality and motivation of teachers. Professionally competent, nurturing and committed teachers are the basis of the child-friendly school; a necessary condition to making education inclusive and effective.

There is good leadership, ' . . . comparatively responsible, efficient and responsive to the needs of teachers and children' (PROBE, 1999, p. 126): there are few vacant positions (reducing the load on any one teacher); salaries are paid on time; the school schedule is fitted into main agricultural periods to allow children's and teachers' farm work; supervisors interested in children's general well-being and in helping teachers address their needs. Corruption is not common.

**Lesson:** Promote and support leadership in the school, by principals, managers and senior teachers, which is capable of ensuring moral support, technically credible guidance and professional integrity.

*The state and its policies.* In Himachal Pradesh, attention has been committed to serious, and seriously applied, policies to develop rural infrastructure, 'with roads and schools receiving high priority. . . . Public policy also involves an explicit commitment to the rapid expansion of education [with] high level of per-capita expenditure on education, . . . about twice the all-India average' (ibid., p. 123).

'Realistic goals were set and pursued with determination', with the government actually taking advantage of programmes such as Operation Blackboard and using all the resources offered where many of the educationally weak states let them languish.

There are at least three teachers in almost all schools and teacher/student ratios are consequently low. There are few 'contradictions between official rhetoric and practical action', reducing the sense of disillusionment infecting many education-poor communities (ibid., p. 123).

**Lesson:** Encourage local, state and national governments to recognize the interactive effects of policies. Schools will be more regularly attended where there are potential employment opportunities and these will both be better served where people and products can move easily and safely, where schools are situated within easy access and where there is tangible evidence of political support for education through effective application of public funds directly and indirectly to it.

The Himachal Pradesh government has pursued concerted policies to reduce inter-regional disparities; '... high investment in the remote tribal districts ... which have caught up remarkably fast with the rest of the state ... there are many incentive schemes for disadvantaged pupils, including free textbooks until class 10 for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children' (ibid., p. 123).

**Lesson:** Acknowledge that trickle-down does not work. If the most excluded communities are going to be reached, policies, programmes and funding must be allocated directly and in sufficient amounts to bring them in from the fringes of society through tailored support to their socio-economic development generally, and to their education more specifically within that. ■

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ACIS	All Children in School
BEFA	basic education for adolescents
CFS	child-friendly school
CHILD	Children's Integrated Learning and Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
ECCD	early childhood care and development
EFA	Education for All
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MLA	monitoring learning achievement
NFE	non-formal education
NGO	non-governmental organization
PROBE	Public Report on Basic Education
PTA	parent-teacher association
SHAPE	School-based Healthy Living and AIDS Prevention in Education
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	universal primary education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All
WSSD	World Summit for Social Development

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Data were also supplied by a number of UNICEF country programmes in response to a questionnaire on the types of exclusion and strategies for addressing it in each country context. These are noted in the references as UNICEF/country office and date.

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## Education for All 2000 Assessment



Millions of children are excluded from schools and learning because governments and societies allow it. Poverty, disability, ethnic difference, child labour and being female are accepted by schools, education systems, governments and international agencies as reasons to condone making children invisible, denying them access to learning, and excluding them from opportunities to learn. Ending exclusion means shifting the perspective from achieving 80% universal primary education to insisting on achieving 100%. This can be done by allowing families to secure and care for children's learning, by creating new modes of delivery and opportunities for education beyond schools, by enhancing teaching quality, and by more actively including children with disabilities and with HIV/AIDS – and girls everywhere. Not acting to end child labour, communal conflict and poverty; not acting to put the causes, consequences and responsibilities for exclusion at the top of all policy agendas – these are no longer options.

Education for All and Children Who are Excluded is one of the thematic studies published by UNESCO for the International Consultative Forum on Education for All as part of the Education for All 2000 Assessment. This worldwide evaluation was undertaken towards the end of the decade following the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) as preparation for the World Education Forum on education for all held in Dakar (Senegal) in April 2000.

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-  Education in Crisis: The Impact and Lessons of the East Asian Financial Shock 1997–99
-  Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis: Challenges for the New Century
-  Funding Agency Contributions to Education for All
-  Girls' Education
-  Inclusion in Education: The Participation of Disabled Learners
-  Literacy and Adult Education
-  Reason for Hope: The Support of NGOs to Education for All
-  School Health and Nutrition
-  Textbooks and Learning Materials 1990–99

Each thematic study aims to provide theoretical vision and practical guidance to education planners and decision-makers at national and international levels. In order to provide a global review, they draw upon and synthesize submissions from partner institutions and agencies in each of the EFA regions. They attempt to describe 'best practices' as well as successful and unsuccessful experiments in policy implementation.