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**Education and Skills in the Post-2015  
Global Landscape: History, Context,  
Lobbies and Visions**

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By Kenneth King and Robert Palmer

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## Foreword

The paper that follows was written as a background paper to the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012 NORRAG workshop on 'Education and Skills in Post-2015 MDGs and EFA: Actors, Agendas and Architecture, which took place in Geneva.

Those of you that have been following the post-2015 process will know that a lot has happened since September! Below we shall quickly outline what have been some of the main developments and new reports that relate to post-2015 education issues between September 2012 – January 2013. In March/April 2013, we shall produce a new paper on education and skills post-2015.

### *UN and member-state related activities*

**UN-facilitated country<sup>1</sup> and thematic<sup>2</sup> consultations on post-2015 are underway. All 11 thematic e-consultations are currently running, including one on education.<sup>3</sup> See: [www.worldwewant2015.org/education2015](http://www.worldwewant2015.org/education2015)**

**'MY World' has been officially launched – You can vote for your top 6 development priorities. Of course all of you will select 'A good education' as your #1 priority! See: [www.myworld2015.org](http://www.myworld2015.org)**

**The Sustainable Development Solutions Network has been set up.** The 10 global expert thematic groups are now being established, including one on 'Early Childhood Development, Education, and Transition to Work'. See: [www.unsdsn.org](http://www.unsdsn.org)

**The UN Secretary General's Education First Initiative was launched in September 2012.** See: [www.globaleducationfirst.org](http://www.globaleducationfirst.org)

**The High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda is in full swing.** There have been meetings so far in New York (September, 2012), London (November 2012), with the next one planned for the end of January 2013 in Monrovia. See: [www.post2015hlp.org](http://www.post2015hlp.org)

**The composition of the Inter-governmental Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs has just been agreed, but no real work has yet started.** See: <http://post2015.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/sdgs-owg-decision-l-48.pdf>

**Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Framework for Education - Marlborough House, 12-13 December 2012.**

**UK International Development Committee Report on Post-2015, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013.**

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<sup>1</sup> Each country consultation will be facilitated by the UN-resident coordinator and involve civil society, the private sector, government and other key national stakeholders.

<sup>2</sup> 11 UN-facilitated thematic consultations which will serve as technical input to the post-2015 process.

<sup>3</sup> The education e-consultation runs from mid-December 2012 to the end of February 2013, and has 4 themes: equitable access; quality of learning; global citizenship, skills and jobs; governance and financing.

## **Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Think Tank activities**

Several CSOs have released their own reports on post-2015 priorities, including what they would like to see for education. Meanwhile, think tanks and other organisations have been organising events on education post-2015. See for example,

- Save the Children's report, Ending Poverty in Our Generation. See [www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)
- ActionAid's report, Righting the MDGs. See: [www.actionaid.org.uk](http://www.actionaid.org.uk)
- Global Campaign for Education (GCE) preliminary findings from the GCE member consultation on post-2015. See: [www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)
- The UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) organised a dialogue with DFID on Education and Development to 2015 and Beyond, December 11<sup>th</sup> 2012. They have also launched a blog covering education post-2015 issues. See: [www.ukfiet.org/cop](http://www.ukfiet.org/cop)
- Brookings event on 'Education and the Post-2015 Development Agenda', 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012. See: [www.brookings.edu/events/2012/12/05-education-development-agenda](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2012/12/05-education-development-agenda)

We will try to make sense of all this – and other issues – in our next paper in March/April 2013.

**Kenneth King and Robert Palmer**, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013

# **EDUCATION AND SKILLS IN THE POST-2015 GLOBAL LANDSCAPE: HISTORY, CONTEXT, LOBBIES AND VISIONS**

**By Kenneth King and Robert Palmer**

## **1. Introduction<sup>4</sup>**

The race to the Post-2015 finishing line is more complicated than the 2012 Olympics. Some runners seem to have already started the race in 2006, 2009, 2010 or 2011; others haven't started. Though it is said to be a global event, most of the current participants and competitors are from the more economically developed economies. It is assumed that there will be prizes but no one seems to know how many. Confusingly, there is a main, general race, but also an education race. Finally, the education and skills communities are hoping to be in both races and get at least one of the prizes in the main race, and many prizes in the education race; but it is not clear which prizes they are after, as there are many different competitors representing education, but it seems that not so many supporting skills development.

The metaphor of a global competition in the post-2015 agenda-setting is only useful up to a point. There is also a good deal of collaboration and even of lobbying, for instance by the many organisations interested in there being a learning goal, or in positioning a sub-sector in the post-2015 frameworks (MDGs and EFA Goals). However, the exercise of setting the next development agenda is going on at different levels, and at different speeds. But already there is a huge amount of writing, reporting and blogging around post-2015, both in general and on specific 'sectors' such as health, environment, and education. In this present status report for NORRAG, the lens will be specifically on education and skills. Hopefully it will begin to provide a review of who is saying what about how this sector should be shaped post-2015.

In reviewing this, it will be vital to recall where the current education goals and targets came from, both the Education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) Goals. But the context and process this time around seem very different from when the MDGs and EFA goals were first set, and the actors now seem very much more diverse. Accordingly, we shall examine the education and skills options being promoted by different multilateral and bilateral actors, as well as by civil society and think tanks. But as NORRAG has always been preoccupied by the role of the South in developments that are claimed to be global, there will be some very preliminary account of how the post-2015 debates are perceived in the countries which are expected to benefit from or be involved with the next development agenda.

### **Different Stakeholders, Different Lenses**

Before turning to the history, context, processes and the perspectives of the different stakeholders selected for brief review, a few words are in order on how the subject of post-2015 is being handled. The matrix of actors and responses (see annex) will illustrate this graphically.

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<sup>4</sup> This paper covers both education and skills development. We often use 'education' to cover both.

A first approach may be termed **Consultation around Post-2015**. This may be illustrated from the process adopted by the European Commission, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the Beyond 2015 group, and the UN Development Group (UNDG), amongst others. In each case, the views of a wider constituency, across Europe, in the developed and developing world, and in 50 individual countries, respectively, are being solicited, in order to frame wider consultative position papers. The key issues in these consultations are who is consulted, how widely the consultation presents the issues, and how the views received are synthesised. This process is intended both to stimulate debate amongst those participating as well as to legitimate public positions through evidence of participation. We shall note that there is a more technical level of participation where, for instance, Brookings is asking many actors to comment on the competencies related to their three selected education priorities for post-2015 (see further below). In other words, there are open consultative processes, and there are consultative processes around particular priorities.

A second approach can be termed **Basic Principles in Addressing Post-2015**. This angle does not pick out a particular education priority or priorities for the goals or targets, but rather underlines the key background conditions or principles on which any choice of specific goals or targets should be based. Thus, many stakeholders assert that any new goals must address equity, quality, accountability, or universality (in the sense of being relevant to all countries, and not just the developing or emerging countries). This approach is very well illustrated by the Results for Development (R4D) paper on post-2015 MDGs (Burnett and Felsman, 2012) and by Burnett's report on a Learning Goal (Burnett, 2012a), or by other papers which discuss the organising or leading frameworks around which any new development agenda could be elaborated (e.g. Adams, 2012).

A third approach is to go beyond the principles or the frameworks, and to specify **Particular Priorities** in education or skills that should actually become new goals or targets. Here one of the foremost actors is the Brookings Compact on Learning (Brookings, 2011), but there is also the notion of 'A Learning Goal for Education' (Barrett, 2009; 2011; Burnett, 2012a; Filmer et al., 2006; Chabott, 2012). Brookings is not content only to emphasise the critical principle of learning but to specify three particular contexts (early years, early primary and post-primary) in which competences should be actually quantified and then measured. There has also been a process within Latin America that has adopted regional education goals (*Metas educativas*) (Burnett, 2012a: 8). We should also recall that several actors have started to suggest a range of post-MDG goals that cover multiple sectors, including education. Here we can point to the 12 'Bellagio Goals' that the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) have elaborated or to the World Economic Forum (WEF) 'Getting to Zero' proposal which both include different specific goals on education and skills – as well as goals relating to other sectors of course. Analysing the history of the emergence of these lobbies around particular priorities is something we need to point to throughout this review.

A fourth approach is to argue that there are **Other Agendas than Post-2015**. This is not so much an approach to post-2015 as an emphasis on the importance of a different agenda or a different perspective on targets. Thus, many developing and emerging economies focus on their own five- or ten-year plans for the country in general or their strategic plans for education in particular. The debate about post-2015 may appear irrelevant to these national priorities. A different version of 'Another Agenda' is to argue that the setting of

international targets actually gets in the way of the regular and necessary routines of educational improvement, by teachers and inspectors, parents and policy makers.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Essential History on Global Education Goals

22 years ago, in March 1990, the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand opened a new era in global education declarations.<sup>6</sup> It sought to put an expanded vision of basic education on the world's agenda. This covered early childhood education, primary education, adult literacy, and education and training in other essential skills. But it is important to underline also what Jomtien did not do. It did not frame a series of six world targets for basic education, but rather a set of six dimensions against which nations could set their own targets. Unlike later groups of goals and targets, it did not have a separate gender equity goal. But it did stress that 'In all cases, the performance targets should include equity by gender' (UNESCO, WCEFA, *Framework*, 1990: 4). In addition, at least two of the Jomtien suggested targets (UPE and Adult Literacy) had deadlines of 2000.

Most important, in the light of later critical discussion about the two education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the six dimensions of Jomtien paid serious attention to 'learning achievement' and not just to 'access' and 'completion'. This was no passing reference to learning. Article 4 of the *World Declaration on Education for All* was entitled 'Focusing on Learning'. And in bold script, it underlined its importance:

**Whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development - for an individual or for society - depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of those opportunities, i.e., whether they incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills and values.** (UNESCO, WCEFA, *Declaration*, 1990: 5. Emphasis in original)<sup>7</sup>

In order to emphasise further this crucial conjunction of access and learning acquisition, the Jomtien *Framework for Action* followed its six priorities with a powerful reaffirmation of the inseparability of access and learning:

Countries may wish to set their own targets for the 1990s in terms of the following proposed dimensions:

1. Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children;
2. Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or whatever higher level of education is considered as "basic") by the year 2000;

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<sup>5</sup> Equally, it might also be argued that some developing countries might reluctantly get involved in post-2015 education discussions as they are concerned that ODA would be influenced by new goals.

<sup>6</sup> There had been earlier declarations and target-settings such as the UNESCO Conferences of the 1960s, e.g. in Addis Ababa for African states in May 1961 (UNESCO and UNECA, 1961), but these were regional. See further King and McGrath (2012).

<sup>7</sup> The term 'learning' occurs no less than 84 times in the 37 pages of the *World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* (UNESCO, 1990), and 'Learning' is even in the title.

3. Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e. g. 80% of 14-year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement;

4. Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age group to be determined in each country) to, say, one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between male and female illiteracy rates;

5. Expansion of provisions of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity;

6. Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all education channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change.

*Levels of performance in the above should be established, when possible. These should be consistent with the focus of basic education both on the universalisation of access and on learning acquisition, as joint and inseparable concerns. (UNESCO, WCEFA, 1990, Framework: 3-4. Emphasis added).*

It is important to point to the crucial acknowledgement by Jomtien of the ‘basic learning needs of all’ from the very first Article of the *Declaration* on ‘Meeting Basic Learning Needs’; otherwise it might be thought that ‘Learning for All’ was something discovered in the 2010s. What is perhaps surprising, given this very strong emphasis on both access and learning, is that the OECD/DAC’s synthesis (OECD/DAC, 1996) of the seven UN-sponsored specialist conferences of the 1990s should have paid no attention to the learning dimension but just proposed universal primary education (UPE) and gender parity in primary and secondary education as two of its seven International Development Goals (IDGs). The majority of these Goals first re-appeared in a paragraph of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, and were later refined and revised, with targets and indicators, to become the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Interestingly, in the Millennium Declaration paragraph, the education component was presented as a single goal as follows:

To ensure that, by the same date [2015], children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education (quoted in Manning, 2009: 94).

In fact, there was a logical contradiction at the heart of this version of the Millennium Declaration goal, since the target for gender equity in primary education was 2015, but the same date was also mentioned for *all* levels of education. The MDG revision process, over a year later in 2001,<sup>8</sup> failed to improve on this; it even made it worse, since it was now said that gender disparity should be eliminated in primary education, ‘preferably by 2005’. This

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<sup>8</sup> Secretary General’s ‘Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration’ (United Nations, 2001).

date was of course 10 years earlier than ‘boys and girls alike’ were meant to have secured equal access to primary education. For good measure, the MDG drafters added that gender disparity could be dispelled from ‘all levels of education no later than 2015’! It is no wonder that MDG 3: ‘promote gender equality and empower women’ very widely failed to be secured by 2005.<sup>9</sup>

### **Twin-track for education-related MDGs and the EFA Goals**

Arguably, there had been scope for the suggested Jomtien targets, two of which had been set for 2000, to be monitored during the 1990s. This process had been built into the Framework for Action. There had been a so-called mid-term review by UNESCO of the targets in 1996 which was not particularly effective (see NORRAG News, 1996). Ten years after Jomtien, in April 2000, the international education community reconvened in Dakar for the World Forum on Education for All. It reported on the previous decade’s results. Which were ‘generally disappointing’ (Shaeffer, 2011: 1).<sup>10</sup> However, the Dakar Forum sought to sharpen the six Jomtien priorities, providing a separate goal for gender equity, and offering donor finance for thoroughly developed EFA plans. It maintained Jomtien’s key emphasis on learning with a specific goal on quality, but it also illustrated just how vital the exact framing of the language of goals must be. In attempting to improve on Jomtien’s use of ‘education and training in other essential skills’ it suggested a goal on ‘appropriate learning and life-skills’. But this terminology proved highly problematic, and it was one of the reasons that the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) has taken fully ten years to address the skills goal. Finally, an EFA GMR on skills is to be launched in October 2012.<sup>11</sup>

After Dakar, UNESCO headquarters took on the responsibility for the regular global monitoring of the six Dakar goals. The first UNESCO monitoring report was extremely weak, just some 40 pages long with only six pages of statistical tables. Within a year, a consortium of donors, with a key role from DFID, had decided to fund a comprehensive Global Monitoring Report located within UNESCO but independently edited and financed. By 2002, its first report: *Education for All: Is the World on Track?* was available (UNESCO, 2002).

The impressive series of annual global monitoring reports that were to follow in the next decade are a key element in any attempt to assess the global influence of the six Dakar goals. Each year these reports had a crucial chapter on the status of all six goals, and in the first five years, each GMR focused particularly on one of the Dakar goals, whether quality, gender equity, adult literacy etc.<sup>12</sup> Nothing on this scale had been attempted in the ten year period after Jomtien. Arguably, there had been no parallel follow-up on this scale for any of the other UN specialised sectoral conferences in the 1990s.

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<sup>9</sup> 113 countries failed to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and of these only 18 were expected to reach the goal by 2015 (quoted in Manning, 2009: 39).

<sup>10</sup> The Dakar Forum by contrast made a large claim: ‘The Dakar Framework for Action is based on the most extensive evaluation of education ever undertaken, the Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment’ (UNESCO, 2000: 3). See also Burnett (2012a) on ‘the failure to make progress towards the first EFA goals established in 1990 in Jomtien’ (ibid.4).

<sup>11</sup> For an account of the skills goals and targets from 1990 to 2012, see King (2011).

<sup>12</sup> The GMR team also reviewed inequality, education and conflict, and reaching the marginalized. The team postponed reviewing the skills goal until 2012.

What has been the impact of these six EFA Dakar goals as compared to the influence of the two education-related MDGs? Methodologically this is very difficult to establish and especially since two of the six Dakar goals are in the same domains (UPE and Gender Parity) as the two MDGs, even if these MDGs are framed significantly differently from the approach of Dakar.<sup>13</sup> Thus Dakar's version of UPE required all children to 'have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality' (UNESCO, 2000: 8). The MDG version, as mentioned earlier, just required boys and girls 'to complete a full course of primary schooling', with no emphasis on quality at all.

Furthermore, the Dakar Framework for Action didn't just mention quality once in the context of the UPE goal, but there was a whole separate goal on quality: 'improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills' (ibid).

We have already referred to the poor and illogical framing of the MDG on gender equality, with the target for gender parity in primary and secondary education being set for 2005, 10 years before the UPE goal, for 'boys and girls alike' was due for implementation. In addition, the gender parity target included secondary education which was not part of any other MDG commitment. Intriguingly, the Dakar goal also had the illogical early date of 2005 for eliminating gender disparities in primary education, and it too added secondary education, nowhere else mentioned in the Dakar goals. However, the Dakar framing on gender was even more demanding, as it contrasted the removal of 'gender disparities' by the earlier date of 2005, but the achievement of 'gender equality in education by 2015'. What did this additional commitment require? The answer is presumably in the second part of this Dakar gender goal: 'a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality' (ibid).

The reason for clarifying the similarities and differences between the six Dakar goals and the two education MDGs is precisely because it is being widely claimed by multilateral and bilateral agencies in the debates about the post-2015 development agenda that the world delivered to quite a large extent on access, but not on quality, and not on learning outcomes. We shall turn to look at these claims in some detail, but do they mean that national governments and donor agencies followed the simplicity of the MDG with its focus merely on access to and completion of a full course of primary education? Did these actors disregard the frequent Dakar (and Jomtien) emphasis on quality?

Putting this another way, can we say that progress on universal primary education is due to the MDGs and not due to the six EFA goals? Even if it is admittedly methodologically impossible to sift out the impact of the education MDGs versus the six EFA goals, commentators appear to do just that. In a comment by a team that included a former director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report, the progress on UPE appears to be allocated to the MDGs and not to the Dakar goals; by contrast, nothing is said about the impact of the Dakar goals of UPE and gender parity, but just about the lack of progress on four of the other Dakar goals:

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<sup>13</sup> We are indebted to Birger Fredriksen for a discussion of the methodological challenge (communication to K.King on 27.06.12)

The precise impact of the education goals cannot be ascertained for well known methodological and measurement reasons. Several of the EFA goals are also very imprecisely defined. Broadly speaking, however, there has been considerable progress toward the MDG goals of universal primary enrolment and of gender parity at all levels of education; there has been an impact on international resource transfers and probably also on domestic spending for primary education; but there has been relatively little progress on the EFA goals of early childhood care and education, youth and adult literacy, skills and quality. (Burnett and Felsman, 2012: 2)

Despite the acknowledged challenges of attributing impact, it is clear from this kind of quotation that the education MDGs rather than the EFA goals are credited with UPE and gender parity impacts. However, it is of course entirely possible that in national ministries of education neither the MDGs nor the EFA goals were as influential as their own national plans and planning horizons. In fact, Burnett, in a valuable earlier paper, argues persuasively that perhaps the greatest impact of the MDGs and the EFA goals was on donor policy:

Because of the widespread adoption of the goals by aid donors and the concentration of this aid on low income countries, the greatest influence of the goals has therefore been on aid flows and resource allocations in these countries. (Burnett, 2012a: 5)

Indeed, apart from Burnett's scoping paper just referred to, one of the most balanced reviews of the impact of the MDGs suggests that while the time-bound MDGs did have an impact on the international development discourse, and selectively on donor governments, they only had a modest impact on developing countries; but the MDG framework 'may well have played a role in amplifying attention to some key areas' (Manning, 2009: 39).<sup>14</sup> This also relates to the relatively weak position of UNESCO in the international arena, and the fact that the ILO has had much more influence in the field of skills development than the EFA skills goal. The ILO is not one of the EFA convening agencies of course.

We have already talked of the uniquely intensive global monitoring of the Dakar goals. But there has also been a parallel global monitoring of the MDGs which has routinely reported on UPE and gender parity along with the other goals. But these World Bank/IMF global monitoring reports have naturally contained much less detail on the two Education MDGs than the EFA global monitoring reports on the six Dakar goals. They do however regularly summarise progress on these MDGs, for instance, noting in their 2012 GMR that of the countries with adequate data, 12 are making slow progress, but will miss the 2015 deadline, while 48, of which 30 are in Sub-Saharan Africa, are seriously off track, making little or no progress (World Bank, 2012: 8).

From this very preliminary look at the formulation of the education MDGs and of the Dakar goals, there are a number of outstanding questions for this review:

How effectively has it been possible to assess the separate impact of the education MDGs and of the Dakar goals?

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<sup>14</sup> See the section of his report on 'What has been the impact of the MDG Framework thus far?' (Manning, 2009: 24-41).

How effectively, in practice, have these two sets of global goals been translated into regional, national or local targets?

What is the case for maintaining but lightly revising the six Dakar and the two education MDGs in any post-2015 agenda?

What is the case for maintaining a set of education goals and of education MDGs but substantially overhauling their content to reflect the difference between 2000 and post-2015?

It is to this very different context in which the post-2015 development agenda is being discussed that we now turn. But first we should note a different dimension to this history of goals than the history of the Jomtien, Dakar and Education MDGs, and that is the history of the emergence of a Learning Goal or of Learning Goals. In one way, this history is intertwined with the history of the EFA goals and Education MDGs in the sense that the failure of those two processes to focus sufficiently on quality and on learning achievement (despite these being underlined in Jomtien and Dakar) actually led to the Learning Goal. In other words, the Learning Goal emerges from the evidence of Lack of Learning. In this sense it is connected to the various assessments mechanisms for reading (e.g. Early Grade Reading Assessment [EGRA] and other regional assessments of learning or rather lack of learning in the South). Interestingly, one analyst of the timeline of global learning goals would trace this back to 2000 (Chabott, 2012).

### **3. Context and Process Issues to Define a Post-2015 Framework**

There are several wider questions to address when considering education and skills post-2015, related to issues of context, process, learning and content. These questions are noted below, and this status report attempts to respond to these questions. These correspond of course to our 'basic principles' articulated earlier.

**Context:** What is the new geo-political and development context that the post-2015 framework needs to address, and what does this mean for education and skills priorities?

**Process:** Who are the key players? What will be the process of reaching an agreement on the post-2015 education and skills agenda? What are the key events and milestones?

**Learning from EFA and MDGs:** To what extent, and in which specific ways, are the EFA goals and education MDGs relevant to today's global context? What does the international community want to carry forward from these goals, for whom, and what was missing?

**Content:** How might education feature as part of: a) any wider post-MDGs; and, b) any sustainable development goals (SDGs) called for at Rio+20? What might follow the six Dakar EFA goals which also expire in 2015?

#### **3.1. Context: Critical General Development Issues and Priorities for a Post-2015 Framework**

The post-2015 development framework will have to address emergent patterns of change, some of which are noted below. Some of these represent new development challenges,

others new development opportunities, and others both. This paper focuses mostly on a sub-set of reports and meetings that have been concerned with education and skills; there has been a whole industry of other reports which have been concerned with future development agendas in general (see, for example, recent issues of NORRAG News – [www.norrag.org](http://www.norrag.org)).

**Changing geo-political landscape** - emerging economies have changed the face of multilateralism, shifting power from small groups such as the G7/G8 to the G20. At the same time, the rise of individual countries like China and India, which together are estimated to account for 35% of the world population and 25% of the world GDP by 2030, should not be discounted (UNDP-ILO, 2012). The post-2015 agenda cannot be set behind closed doors, or be principally led by OECD-DAC countries; but should recognize the new face of multilateralism.

**Domestic finance and an expanding array of development actors** – Domestic revenue in (most) developing countries is by far the largest source of development financing (EC, 2012). And, while there will still be some heavily aid dependent countries, emerging economies like Brazil, India, China, South Africa will be more concerned about domestic resource mobilization issues than overseas development assistance (ODA). And, even in the heavily aid dependent countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, only a quarter of education spending comes from ODA; the bulk comes from domestic revenues (UNESCO, 2011c). Meanwhile, private remittances and foreign investment now exceed total global ODA many times over. At the same time, traditional ODA budgets are being cut in many developed countries because of global recession, and emerging powers are increasingly engaging in south-south cooperation that is not classified or recorded as ODA, or even referred to as ‘aid’ by such nations. Development, therefore, is less and less about ODA; and the role of the approximately \$130bn of ODA given annually (OECD, 2012) is starting to change (Shafik, 2010). It is important, therefore that any post-2015 global development agenda is constructed not just based on current experience with ODA, but on the new realities of development financing. We shall note in this paper, however, that any future MDGs or EFA goals will certainly have as much of an impact on the development agencies and their priorities as on any other actors.

**New characteristics of poverty** – Today, the majority of poor people are not living in the poorest countries. Over 70 percent of people living in poverty (approximately 1.2 billion) live in middle-income countries (Sumner, 2010; WEF-GAC, 2012). This is a strong reason why the post-2015 global development agenda should not only address the lowest-income countries; such an approach would fail to improve the living standards of over a billion individuals. Nonetheless, there are still about 460 million poor people living in low-income countries;<sup>15</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa as well as conflict and fragile societies and weak states are two areas where increased attention to poverty should be placed over the medium term.

**Concern over the quality and quantity of jobs, and of widening inequalities** – ‘Employment has become critical in the aftermath of the global crisis and will remain a central concern toward 2015 and beyond’.<sup>16</sup> In 2011, 200 million people were officially

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news\\_stories/2011/111207\\_2.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2011/111207_2.html)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/events/WCMS\\_184090/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/events/WCMS_184090/lang--en/index.htm)

unemployed around the world, including 75 million youth (ILO, 2012a, b).<sup>17</sup> This is only part of the picture of course, as many more millions are in working poverty; one in three workers in the world lives on less than \$2/day (ILO, 2012a). This lack of productive and decent work has claimed to have contributed to rising inequality and social unrest in ‘all countries, irrespective of their position on the development board’ (ILO, 2012a). Widening inequalities, in all countries (low-, middle-, and high-income), related to income, gender, location and age are on the rise (cf. UNESCO, 2008). The post-2015 framework needs to address the twin, but related, challenges of employment<sup>18</sup> and inequality. In addition, we had anticipated that this jobs crisis would lead to a post-2015 debate about the potential of skills development. However, the scale of the jobs crisis is not matched by significant attention to skills development as part of post-2015 agenda.

**Environmental concerns** – The effects of climate change, the growing pressure on natural resources and increased energy consumption are leading to environmental degradation. The issue of sustainable development (with its environmental, economic and social dimensions) has to be integrated into the post-2015 framework.

**Conflict and development** – Those countries furthest from reaching the MDGs are those affected by conflict (UN, 2012c). This fact needs to be reflected in post-2015 thinking.

**Technological advances** – Increased internet penetration, the increasing use of email and social networks, the widespread use of mobiles (and, increasingly, smart phones), laptops and tablet computers and many other types of technological developments make 2015 a very different landscape than 2000 or 1990.

### **New educational concerns and opportunities**

Even if the world had fully ‘delivered on Dakar’, the world has changed since 2000 and therefore a rethink of approach is required. Looking beyond 2015, it is important to not only look at the role of education in tackling new global challenges, but also look at opportunities and how to build on them (especially with regard to employment and work creation).

In addition to the overall patterns of change, noted above, there are several key issues worth noting that relate specifically to how the context for education and skills has changed since 2000. Technological developments and the rapid increases in the type and availability of information are quickening the move towards learner-centered education. Globalisation, increasing levels of education, and the rise of high-skill low-wage economies are eroding the function of education as a ‘great equaliser’; global labour markets increasingly require higher levels of skill and competencies, and competition for higher-skill jobs is pushing up demand for higher levels for education and training. In the majority of cases, a primary education, alone, is no longer a sufficient minimum educational level. Compared to the 1980s-early 2000s period where **Psacharopoulos** rate of return style assessments repeatedly emphasised the primacy of primary education, since the mid-2000s there has been a shift towards studies that acknowledge that the highest gains come from higher

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<sup>17</sup> The notion of ‘officially unemployed’ does not make much sense in a world where the bulk of countries still do not have any unemployment benefit.

<sup>18</sup> There was, of course, a new indicator added to the original MDGs in 2005 related to achieving ‘full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people’ (target 1b).

levels of education (see Palmer et al., 2007 for a review). The value of primary education has changed from being sufficient in and of itself, to now being merely an essential first step on the ladder to higher levels of education and training.

### **3.2. The Planning Process for the Post-2015 Agenda**

We are interested here in both the overall planning process in relation to post-2015/post-MDG framework (as this includes education as a theme), and the specific activities that are going on that will help determine a post-EFA educational framework. There are many actors involved including the official process of the UN, as well as a range of actors in civil society, national governments and think-tanks. We may wish to note that the official UN 'Planning' process towards post-2015 can be distinguished from a whole series of what may be called lobbying processes or pressure groups for particular dimensions of education or skills. We shall point to these, en route.

#### **The UN System**

A UN post-2015 Task Team was set up in September 2011 to support UN system-wide preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda. The team is made up of experts from over 50 UN entities. Their June 2012 report, *Realizing the Future We Want For All* (UN, 2012c) is organised around the three principles of human rights, equity and sustainability.

However, the process of how to reach a consensus about the post-2015 agenda still lacks clarity; and this needs to be resolved as soon as possible. While it is healthy to have a diversity of approaches, it is also important that these approaches are coordinated. After the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012,<sup>19</sup> the so-called international community was left with two international processes, running almost exactly in parallel, and both leading up to the UN General Assembly in 2013 (and, meanwhile, the current MDGs have 3 years left to run):

- **A Post-2015 High Level Panel (HLP)**<sup>20</sup> (UN, 2012a): Led by 3 co-chairs (heads of state of UK, Indonesia and Liberia) and made up of a further 23 panel members, the HLP has been tasked to advise on the global development agenda beyond 2015. The HLP is linked to the UN Secretary General via a Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General on Post-2015 Planning, Amina Mohammed, a former Nigerian government official and a founder of the Global Campaign for Education member coalition in Nigeria. The first meeting of this HLP is scheduled to coincide with the UN General Assembly meetings towards the end of September 2012; the date set for the first meeting is 25<sup>th</sup> September.
- **An Inter-governmental Working Group (IGWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. At the Rio+20 Conference, Member States agreed on an intergovernmental process that will focus on designing SDGs. Rio+20 mandated the setting up of 30-member working group which will submit a report on SDGs during 2013; it is expected that this working group would be set up in September 2012. Some of the initial discussions around SDGs have not focused only on environmental issues, but also on issues such as jobs, equity etc.

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<sup>19</sup> The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 20-22, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Where 'HLP' is used, by itself, in this report it refers to the post-2015 High Level Panel.

There currently seems to be quite a high degree of overlap in the remit of the HLP and IGWG on SDGs. In order to ensure closer coordination, the UN has said that both the timing of the reports and the support provided by the UN system are being aligned. There will be one UN Task Team that will support both the HLP and the SDG working group (UN, 2012b). The Rio+20 outcome document (UN, 2012d) stressed the imperative of ensuring full convergence of the Rio+20 and post-2015 processes. Meanwhile, the terms of reference of the HLP (UN, 2012b), notes that it is ‘essential for the work of the HLP and of the intergovernmental Working Group on the SDGs to inform each other’. Despite such explicit instructions for each to coordinate with the other, there is not yet a lot of clarity on how this will transpire. It will be essential to be clear on both the lines of communication and the division of labour between these two groups.

To feed into the UN deliberations, as well as the HLP, the UN Development Group (UNDG) is facilitating country and thematic consultations, as well as an online consultation:

- **50 country<sup>21</sup> consultations** between mid 2012 – January 2013. All these consultations are in the South.
- **Global thematic consultations** by January 2013 on key issues, including education (primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational).<sup>22</sup> The first thematic global consultation took place in Tokyo in mid-May 2012, on the subject of structural change, productive capacities, and employment (organised by the UNDP and ILO with support from JICA) (UNDP-ILO, 2012).
- **Online consultation via a web portal** for interaction and information exchange. In September 2012 the **World We Want Beyond 2015** web platform<sup>23</sup> will be launched as a joint open consultation initiative of civil society and the United Nations; this site is facilitated by the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP).<sup>24</sup>

UNESCO may be expected to lead the specific education debates around the post-2015 framework on EFA, but its Headquarters has still not developed a definitive position paper on education and skills in the post-2015 MDG consultation process.<sup>25</sup> In fact, there is even a risk that the post-MDG and post-EFA discussions will be disconnected, or perhaps loosely connected. It should be noted that UNESCO has a double demand in respect of any future goals – to ensure that Education is found within any wider post-MDG agenda, and equally to ensure some reflection upon and revision of the Six Dakar goals.

Several Regional UNESCO meetings have, however, taken place. One of the key ones was organised by UNESCO’s Asia-Pacific Regional Office for Education, in co-operation with the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and UNICEF Regional Offices, which held an

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<sup>21</sup> List of the 50 countries: <http://www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/Table%2050%20countries.JPG>

<sup>22</sup> The other themes include: Inequalities; Population; Health; Growth & Employment; Conflict & Fragility; Governance; Environmental Sustainability & Food Security and Nutrition.

<sup>23</sup> [www.worldwewant2015.org](http://www.worldwewant2015.org)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.whiteband.org/> The site has been online since July, but not fully functional. It is expected that by September it will be operational.

<sup>25</sup> Of course, there is the UNESCO-led background paper for the UN post-2105 task team report, which we discuss below (see UNESCO, 2012a).

expert meeting on the post-2015 education agenda for the region in Bangkok, 9-11 May 2012.<sup>26</sup>

UNESCO has also started the process of engaging with post-EFA issues in other regions; for example, in July 2012 UNESCO Santiago, in collaboration with UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) created a working group 'to consider collectively and among agencies the education agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean beyond 2015'.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of August 2012, it was announced that in September 2012 UNESCO would join forces with UNICEF and other UN agencies and NGOs and 'launch a six-month "global conversation" with leading education stakeholders'. It is envisaged that this global education consultation will have four dimensions:<sup>28</sup>

- Regional face to face meetings.
- A civil society consultation on EFA via UNESCO's Coordinating Committee for NGOs (CCNGO)<sup>29</sup> (24-26 October in Paris).
- Global online consultations to engage youth/children and experts, academics, development partners and NGOs (2 are planned).
- A global meeting of key stakeholders (ministers, officials, representatives, civil society, NGO coalitions, UN partners, and the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel).

The 'end' milestone in the post-EFA process is a World Conference on EFA, scheduled for April 2015, which will assess EFA progress and the 'way forward for education' (UN, 2012c: 51). This 2015 World Conference on EFA and beyond 'should be the culmination of national, sub-regional and regional reflections'; it will be held in the Republic of Korea in 2015' (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012:10).

Two other official UN developments which are not formally linked to the post-EFA or post-MDG processes, but which will be relevant to education thinking beyond 2015, are the appointment of Gordon Brown as UN Special Envoy on Global Education in July 2012,<sup>30</sup> and the September 2012 launch of the UN SG's five-year Global Education Initiative, 'Education First'.<sup>31</sup> The latter initiative is designed to accelerate progress toward the current EFA goals and MDG #2 (UPE) in selected least developed, post-conflict and post-disaster countries.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/epr/erf/>

<sup>27</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=15788&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15788&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco\\_and\\_unicef\\_unite\\_with\\_partners\\_to\\_define\\_educations\\_role\\_beyond\\_2015/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_and_unicef_unite_with_partners_to_define_educations_role_beyond_2015/)

<sup>29</sup> The CCNGO/EFA network includes close to 300 national, regional and international member organizations.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sga1357.doc.htm>

<sup>31</sup> 'While ostensibly geared towards achieving the 2015 agenda, it is inevitable that this initiative will also focus attention on setting post-2015 priorities' (Burnett and Felsman, 2012: 18), especially since the initiative's five-year time-frame includes the period leading up to, and just beyond, 2015. The three priority areas of the Initiative are: 1) Put every child in school (free education for all, education in emergencies, gender equality); 2) Improve the quality of education (teacher gap, youth learning and skills, ICT); and, 3) Foster global citizenship ([http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/irina\\_bokova\\_takes\\_part\\_in\\_the\\_high\\_level\\_steering\\_committee\\_of\\_education\\_first/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/irina_bokova_takes_part_in_the_high_level_steering_committee_of_education_first/)). A

## Civil Society and Think-Tanks

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are increasingly involved in the general post-2015 debate, though leadership appears to be coming from the International, mainly northern-based CSOs. One of the most vocal CSO groups is the global campaign *Beyond 2015* which is made up of almost 400 CSOs;<sup>32</sup> their website ([www.beyond2015.org](http://www.beyond2015.org)) contains a wide range of post-2015 resources and news. Their focus is on the post-2015 process as a whole of course, and not specifically on education.

In addition to *Beyond 2015*, and as noted above, the **World We Want Beyond 2015** web platform will be launched as a joint civil society UN initiative in September 2012.

The UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI) appears to be the leading think-tank when it comes to producing and commissioning pieces on the general post-2015 framework.<sup>33</sup> ODI also manages a blog ([www.post2015.org](http://www.post2015.org)) which brings together research and opinion on the general post-2015 agenda. We shall note below that it has commissioned some work on education and health goals.

CSOs and think-tanks are thus very much involved in looking at and influencing the post-2015 educational framework. Some of the key actors include the Global Campaign for Education, The Brookings Institution and the Results for Development Institute.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is currently consulting with its membership in 96 countries in the North and South in order to develop a strong statement of what they believe should come next in terms of international frameworks and agreements on education; GCE expect to release their 'vision' of education post-2015 in September 2012.<sup>34</sup>

The US-based Brookings-led Global Compact on Learning brings together several (mostly) northern foundations, some development partners (DFID, World Bank), and the GPE around a 'policy agenda that focuses on access to quality and relevant learning opportunities for all children and youth, including those who are out of school'.<sup>35</sup> The priorities for the Global Compact, which are outlined in a 2011 report (Brookings, 2011),<sup>36</sup> include early childhood development, literacy and numeracy in lower primary, and relevant post-primary education opportunities. The Global Compact on Learning strives to establish international targets based on learning standards; Brookings (Centre for Universal Education) and UNESCO-UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) have established a Learning Metrics Task Force explicitly to influence the post-MDG and broader post-2015 education agenda by developing learning competencies and how these could be measured and tracked. In a final report scheduled for September 2013, the Task Force will provide recommendations on what kind of learning

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high-level steering committee, technical advisory group and a global heads of state champions group have been selected by the secretary-general to lead the new initiative (Van Fleet, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> 25% of all CSOs are UK-based, and over 60% of all the CSO members are based in the north. <http://www.beyond2015.org/participating-organisations-beyond-2015>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.odi.org.uk/work/programmes/growth-poverty-inequality/topics/details.asp?id=625&title=mdgs-2015-beyond>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/campaigns/education-post-2015>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.globalcompactonlearning.org/>

<sup>36</sup> The report is authored by Jenny Perlman Robinson, but for ease of recognition we will refer to it as Brookings, 2011.

competencies are important (from early childhood through post-primary), how these can be measured, and how these can be implemented. We should recognize therefore that this initiative should be linked to the focus on learning, and on the development of learning goals.

Results for Development (R4D),<sup>37</sup> a non-profit development think-tank based in the US, conducted an exercise to investigate and scope a post-MDG education framework (see Burnett and Felsman, 2012) and did a scoping study on MDG2 Post-2015 (Burnett, 2012a).<sup>38</sup> Both of these are invaluable for analyzing the state of the post-2015 education and skills landscape in 2012.

### **National governments**

The shape of any post-2015 framework (both the overall post-MDG framework and any specific post-EFA framework) will be heavily influenced by the preferences of the most engaged and active national governments. Indonesia, Liberia, and UK, whose heads of government co-chair the UN HLP, could be crucial as already mentioned.

Among the traditional donors, the UK is particularly well-positioned potentially to shape the post-2015 development agenda, including in education; the UK Prime Minister (PM), David Cameron, is one of the 3 co-chairs of the post-2015 HLP, and, as just mentioned, the former UK PM, Gordon Brown, was recently appointed as the UN Special Envoy on Global Education, and also heads the High Level Panel on Education, set up in 2011 ([www.educationpanel.org](http://www.educationpanel.org)).<sup>39</sup>

### **3.3. Learning from EFA and the Education MDGs**

What lessons can be learned from the overall MDG process? And what lessons can be learned from the progress achieved, and challenges faced, in trying to reach the six EFA goals and the two education MDGs? Box 1 outlines several lessons and issues arising from the general MDG experience.

#### **Box 1. General Process Lessons to Consider for the Post-2015 Framework**

**Universal:** A widespread perception of the current MDG framework is that it reflects a donor-recipient relationship; the majority of the goals are seen as relating only to low income countries, and developed countries feature effectively as aid donors (UN, 2012c). The middle-income countries which – as noted above – now contain the majority of the worlds’ poor people were not very engaged with the MDGs (Burnett and Felsman, 2012). The post-2015 framework and goals should be relevant to all countries, and not just for (low-income) developing countries (Burnett, 2012b; UN, 2012c; UNDP-ILO, 2012). However, such goals need to allow for targets that can better contextualise the overall framework, at the regional, national and sub-national level (UN, 2012c).

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.resultsfordevelopment.org/focus-areas/future-goals-global-education>

<sup>38</sup> R4D also did a piece on health issues post-2015.

<sup>39</sup> Note that this ‘High Level Panel on Education’ is different from the ‘UN High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda’. The Former Panel was founded as an independent forum in 2011 by the Global Campaign for Education.

**Goals, objectives, priorities, targets, standards, indicators and thresholds are useful things to have.** They focus global attention onto a few key priorities; they are politically useful to drive progress. The report of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda argues that the post-2015 framework should retain the format of concrete goals, targets and indicators (UN, 2012c).

**Ensure inclusivity in setting the post-2015 agenda.** The global consultation process on the post-2015 agenda needs to be inclusive and genuine; the credibility will come in the representations that come to these meetings. One of the criticisms of the way the current MDGs were put together was that it was essentially a process dominated by donor governments. While the UNDG and others are holding post-2015 consultation events in developing countries, it is unclear how much of a voice the South really have at present. The post-2015 agenda may also be informed by new information collected by using new technologies, including social media platforms.

**Brevity is good.** One key reason for the impact the MDGs have had lies in the limited number of goals and targets (UN, 2012c). Rather than trying to encapsulate everything that was or could be known about development and poverty, the MDGs are a succinct list of a few goals on which there is global consensus and through which popular support and political action can be mobilized; as Manning puts it: 'less is more' (Manning, 2009: 97). Or as the report of the first thematic consultation on the post-2015 framework for development put it: 'The goals in the new agenda should retain the simplicity and clarity of the MDGs' (UNDP-ILO, 2012: 5).

**Getting concrete ideas on the table, fast.** The UN's HLP should ideally catalyze a genuine global debate and get people arguing about concrete options as soon as possible. It is important to move quickly to define the choices the world faces, set out the benefits, costs, and risks of each option. The HLP is due to meet for the first time on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2012; however, there is still no independent secretariat in place to support their deliberations.<sup>40</sup> By February 2013, it is expected that the HLP would have completed its report.

With regard to specific lessons learned from the six EFA goals and the two education MDGs, the following points can be noted:

**EFA (and MDGs more broadly) remain an unfinished business. The international community needs to redouble efforts to 2015 and then go beyond.** As the post-2015 agenda is being discussed, it is important not to forget the unfinished ambitions of the pre-2015 agenda. Or, as Kevin Watkins (former director of the EFA GMR) puts it: 'as 2015 nears, the twin challenge is to galvanize international efforts to deliver on the MDG deadline while framing an agenda that addresses' (Watkins, 2012)<sup>41</sup> the new development challenges.

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<sup>40</sup> The naming of the HLP co-chairs in May 2012, and the subsequent naming of the other panel members in July 2012, was not accompanied by the setting up of a secretariat to support them; as of the start of September, there is still no secretariat in place and the HLP members are currently dealing bilaterally directly with Amina Mohammad, Special Advisor of the UN SG on the post-2015 planning.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/jun/20/rio20-development-gains>

The **education MDGs failed to focus on the end goal of learning**, and – as mentioned earlier - even though the EFA goals made specific mention of ‘quality’ and ‘learning outcomes’ these were largely ignored aspects; access issues dominated. Meanwhile, in both the EFA goals and education MDGs **issues of inequality** became disguised in reporting because of the focus on aggregating data and providing the average situation. A next round of education goals could more explicitly track progress towards goals among different population groups. However, this will very much depend on the availability of data.

**Because UPE and gender parity are both EFA goals and education MDGs, priority has (wrongly) tended to be given to these over the wider EFA agenda;** thus, early childhood education, adult literacy, skills for young people and – as noted above – quality and learning were given less attention.

**Several of the EFA goals were never clearly defined** (e.g. Goal 3 – life skills), which further contributed to them being neglected (see Burnett, 2012a). For example, EFA Goal 3 has been notoriously hard to monitor because of the way it was defined as well as the availability of data (see King and Palmer, 2008). As Nick Burnett, a former Director of the EFA GMR, noted: ‘we do not really know how we are doing on skills, because we have not figured out properly how to define them and measure them’ (quoted in King and Palmer, 2008). The GMR will, finally, try to address skills in the GMR 2012. What is clear with regard to any post-2015 skills goal, is that it needs to be much better defined than EFA Goal 3, and take account of data availability.

**The role of education in achieving other MDGs has been under-emphasised** - There has not been sufficient recognition of the role that education plays in all the other MDGs. We shall note below that importance is given to the ‘Education Link’ with other possible post-2015 frameworks.

**Monitoring to continue.** Monitoring of the six EFA goals has been going on for 12 years since the first UNESCO Global Monitoring Report in 2001. If the EFA goals, or some variation of them, continue post-2015, the EFA GMR should also continue (cf. Burnett, 2012b). However, the paucity of data in many developing countries – and of local capacity to analyze data – will limit monitoring possibilities. For areas like skills development, it is known that country information systems are very inadequate; particular focus will be needed to develop capacity and support information systems if the desired degree of monitoring (and disaggregation) is to be possible.

**Accountability needs to be improved:** Within the EFA-framework there is somewhat of a failure when it came to holding countries accountable for the goals. Between 2001-2011, an EFA High-Level Group was tasked with ‘generat[ing] political momentum and mobiliz[ing] financial, technical and political support towards the achievement of the EFA goals and the education-related... MDGs’,<sup>42</sup> However, the EFA High-Level Group ‘meetings were not effective’ (Burnett, 2012b; Burnett and Felsman, 2012), and UNESCO ‘failed to attract senior political representatives from donor countries to the EFA High-level Group’ (Steer and Wathne, 2009: xi). In 2011, the global EFA coordination architecture was reformed

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/international-cooperation/high-level-group/>

(UNESCO, 2011a). Going forward, a post-EFA framework should aim to have more effective accountability mechanisms built in.

**The annual EFA financing gap persists.** The Dakar Framework for Action noted that: 'No countries seriously committed to Education for All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources' (UNESCO, 2000: 18). However, this pledge was not fulfilled. Latest estimates are that the annual external EFA financing gap is \$16bn (UNESCO, 2011), and there are no real prospects for this being filled with traditional financing approaches. In addition to traditional ODA, there is a need for the post-EFA framework to consider emerging donors, innovative financing, the role of the private sector (e.g. via public-private partnerships, PPPs, or corporate social responsibility, CSR), and of course domestic revenues. We shall note below that there is a close potential link between the MDGs and EFA goals and the changing priorities of development aid.

**EFA was too Ministry of Education (MOE)-centric and too focused on education rather than education and skills** – EFA has been primarily related to pre-tertiary education; none of the lead EFA agencies (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank), except the World Bank, has any real expertise in cross-ministerial (or private sector) technical and vocational skills development or in higher education.<sup>43</sup> Discussion on EFA at country level is largely with ministries of education (MOE), and not ministries of labour (that tend to have oversight of vocational training) or ministries of higher education. EFA, therefore, is very MOE-centric. A post-EFA framework should be more holistic and the process of determining future education and skills priorities should not only involve ministries of education in developing countries, but must also engage with ministries of higher education and of labour, as well as national social partners and the private sector. However, the country-level UNESCO consultations on post-EFA are largely linked into MOEs. UNESCO's recent 'World Congress on TVET', in Shanghai (May 2012) was very much more linked to ministries of education than to ministries of labour; though there were some representatives from TVET councils and coordinating bodies in different countries.

### **3.4. Education and Skills Options and Priorities Post-2015**

Unlike the build-up to Jomtien or to Dakar, where there were not a whole series of different education and training stakeholders promoting different global priorities, the present landscape of proposals for any continuation of global goals is complex.<sup>44</sup> We should, however, start with UNESCO, as the specialised agency deemed responsible for Education for All (EFA).

#### **3.4.1. Proposals on Education and Skills Beyond 2015, associated with UNESCO**

Shaeffer, S. (2011) *Summary of Progress Towards Education For All* (UNESCO)

Perhaps surprisingly there does not appear to have been a coordinated UNESCO leadership

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<sup>43</sup> UNESCO, of course, has a focus on TVET, and also is concerned with higher education. But TVET under UNESCO is very focused on Ministry of Education technical and vocational education programs, rather than the wider domain of TVET.  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/about-us/who-we-are/whos-who/>

<sup>44</sup> For an account of the process towards Jomtien see NORRAG News (1990).

role around education post-2015 until 2012.<sup>45</sup> There had been, however, a summary of regional progress towards EFA, carried out for a meeting held in Jomtien in January 2011. This was not a slightly late version of Jomtien +20, in the manner of Rio +20; but apart from summarising EFA regional progress, the report for the meeting did look 'Beyond 2015' and made some 'Recommendations for the future of EFA' (Shaeffer, 2011: 18).

This report judged, as a preliminary assumption, that any extrapolation from the present trends without massive attention to growing inequity, could mean that 'the gap between the haves and have-nots, the reached and the unreached, the included and the excluded will only increase' (ibid.). A second assumption is that the sheer contrast in the world situation of post-2015 as compared to post-1990 would mean that the 2015 goals would need to be different in kind from those of Jomtien and Dakar. In other words, education post-2015 could not be business as usual.

Shaeffer's recommendations to any authors of post-2015 EFA goals are six with a seventh hugely important point about action on equity.<sup>46</sup> His first three proposals relate to early years' education, from 0-3 and in the first two years of primary school. Interventions and innovations in these initial years are critical to later achievement; and, in parallel, comprehensive early assessments of learning achievement are vital to avoiding exclusion and drop-outs.

His second group of recommendations cover the absolutely critical role of improving teacher quality; the reform of secondary education to make it more accessible and work-relevant to the otherwise excluded; and the exploration of alternative forms of educational delivery. Interestingly, the sixth was one of the original six Jomtien priorities which was subsequently dropped in the Dakar World Forum of 2000.

But his seventh and last recommendation was probably the most important: 'above all, **ensuring a great focus on equity** – by urban-rural location, sex, ethnicity and language, socio-economic quintile, and ability' (Shaeffer, op. cit. 18, emphasis added).

None of these proposals was turned into the language of goals, targets and indicators, but we shall note that the focus on early years, equity and the assessment of learning will turn up in many other post-2015 recommendations for education.

*Education and Skills for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Beyond 2015 (UNESCO, 2012a)*

A second example of post-2015 education discussions more formally associated with UNESCO was the 'thematic think piece' done by UNESCO as one of 18 papers commissioned by the UN Task Team on the post-2015 UN development agenda. Significantly, its title covered both education and skills development: *Education and skills for inclusive and sustainable development beyond 2015* (UNESCO, 2012a). However, this 16 page document contained just three pages on 'The international education agenda beyond 2015'.

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<sup>45</sup> However, there is a 2011 UN ECOSOC piece that was initially drafted by UNESCO (UN ECOSOC, 2011). There is a follow up piece the year after (ECOSOC, 2012a).

<sup>46</sup> Shaeffer was influential both in Jomtien and in Dakar, and was the Director of the UNESCO regional office in Bangkok from 2001-8.

For this report, like Shaeffer's, the starting point was equity. Indeed, it argued that any education goals should have an equity focus, and that this should utilise disaggregated data, and pay particular attention to the bottom 20%, which were often those still excluded from the MDG and EFA goal of universal primary school completion.

Beyond equity, the think piece noted the shift towards a results focus on learning outcomes and not just on access. This had led to a strong interest in measuring the quality of learning at different levels. But there was a hesitation about moving to an emphasis on large-scale assessments of learning; rather, such assessments of learning should be grounded in local contexts, and should utilise not only outcome targets but qualitative process goals, set nationally.

These two priorities of equity and quality are not turned into draft goals or target statements. The same is true for a whole series of what are called, 'Emerging trends and the future of education'. These cover a whole gamut from the information society to life long learning, skills requirements, foundational skills, and employability challenges. Although the term 'skills' is used a good deal in this short document, there is no attempt to suggest any global goal or target associated with skills development. Similarly with 'sustainable human development', there is no elaboration of what this might mean in terms of goals or targets. This process of scoping several future possibilities may be in danger of covering too much, and thus risking a lack of focus.

UNESCO's think piece draws upon, in one respect, the debate about the pros and cons of establishing a Millennium Learning Goal (MLG). This goes back to a proposal by three World Bank economists in 2006 (Filmer et al.)<sup>47</sup> to solve the contradiction of countries 'successfully' reaching the education MDGs of access, completion and gender parity but with a massive deficit in actual learning. Instead the MLG would measure the progress of the whole education system, by assessing the mastery of the desired competencies of an entire age cohort, whether they are in school or not.

Arguably, something of this approach lies behind the Global Compact on Learning, which we shall come to in a moment. There have been some criticisms of the high stakes tests which might be associated with an MLG, but which could undermine the achievement of education goals that are not so readily measurable. One answer to this is to develop 'process goals' with qualitative targets for the assessment of learning, but these could be much harder to compare cross-nationally (Barrett, 2011).<sup>48</sup> At face value, this appears to lack the vital simplicity of any post-2015 goal that is to be universally acceptable. With the benefit of hindsight, it may well be that whatever the design flaws with some of the MDGs, the sheer simplicity, even to politicians, of a goal like 'achieve universal primary education' is one of the main reasons for its widespread adoption.

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<sup>47</sup> Burnett (2012a: 9) comments that Filmer et al.'s suggestion for what a learning goal might look like is the 'only... specific proposal [that] appears to exist'. They propose that a learning goal 'could be constructed in which: Individual or sets of countries define a realistic set of competencies as low and high learning targets; Countries agree on how to measure the desired competencies from schooling on a regular basis; International comparisons measure performance of age cohorts rather than school grades' (ibid.).

<sup>48</sup> A process goal such as 'schools are regularly inspected and teachers given constructive feedback on their classroom practice' might be relevant but hard to make part of an assessment instrument.

If MDG 2: 'Achieve universal primary education' is compared with the EFA Goal 2: 'ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality', it can be seen how readily accessible the former is. Of course, some of the qualifications to the simplicity of the MDG are added in the relevant target and indicator statements. But for any future goal, whether MDG or MLG, to be widely acceptable, this degree of immediate understandability is vital. This may prove to be a difficulty with the use by UNESCO of terms like 'process targets and indicators'; they are not immediately intelligible.

*Towards EFA and Beyond – Shaping a New Vision of Education* (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012)

This regional high-level meeting in Bangkok had a twin-track: emphasizing that the EFA goals still needed to be fulfilled, but recognizing that there were other pressing priorities for inclusion in any education agenda post-2015 (see box 2 for the key messages from this meeting). Perhaps predictably, there were several of these new candidates for inclusion. But the opportunity was taken to stress education's role beyond the education sector. Arguably, education plays a fundamental role in all other development goals (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012: 1).

**Box. 2. UNESCO Bangkok (2012) – Key messages from an Asia-Pacific experts meeting on education post-2015**

- **EFA remains an unfinished agenda in the region.** Meeting the EFA goals requires strengthened efforts to address persistent disparities in the region;
- **EFA is of continued relevance, yet there is need to go beyond current EFA goals.** Key education issues such as access, learning, equity and quality of education, teachers, and skills development should be areas of emphasis and feature prominently among the education goals and strategies to be incorporated in post-2015 development agendas. Education should be addressed across the life-cycle and future approaches to education need to be underpinned by a life-long-learning approach;
- **There is a need for rethinking education in light of emerging trends;** broader socio-economic development and challenges must be clearly reflected in the discussion on the future of education, and;
- **There must be both an education-specific development agenda beyond 2015 and explicit reference to education in all global agendas,** given the fundamental role of education in advancing human development.

Source: UNESCO-Bangkok (2012)

Not surprisingly, the review of issues for a post-2015 education agenda ranged widely, and went beyond the concern for fulfilling the existing Dakar EFA goals. Greater equity, once again, was first on the agenda, along with teachers, early learning as well as post-basic opportunities. But culture and values were highlighted, as were skills and competencies. This accumulation of priorities as experts look beyond 2015 is one of the obvious temptations of considering new visions. The same is true of the individual items; each of them may contain multiple angles and perspectives. Thus, skills and competencies are not

just concerned with cognitive competencies. Shortly, the scope is widened to non-cognitive competencies and skills. Instead of a focus on some easily captured dimension of skills for a learning goal, the vision becomes larger and more complex: 'a new and broadened conceptualization of learning is required, which encompasses learning of generic skills and meta-cognitive skills (including creativity, flexibility and adaptability), learning for living together, and learning for a world in which sustainability is becoming increasingly vital' (UNESCO Bangkok, 2012: 6).

In a similar vein, the desire to set an education-specific international agenda beyond 2015 goes alongside the desire to argue for the 'interrelatedness between education and all development goals' (Ibid. 8). We shall return to this key argument for education as a link to other development goals later in this paper. But we recognize the constant tension between focusing on relatively narrow, visible, politically intelligible goals on the one hand and 'broader conceptions of education and training for the future' (ibid.: 11).<sup>49</sup>

These three illustrative perspectives from UNESCO on education and skills beyond 2015 do share common ground, but as an organization that has traditionally sought to be inclusive and emphasise many different areas of importance, it may operate at a disadvantage if it has to prioritise just one or two key goals or targets. UNESCO has, as we have said, to face two ways at the same time: to ensure that any future MDG process accommodates at least one crucial education goal, but at the same time to consider for the future the revision of the whole six Dakar goals with which UNESCO has been so closely associated.

### **3.4.2. Proposals on Education and Skills Beyond 2015, associated with other multilateral and multi-stakeholder bodies**

#### *UNICEF*

UNICEF has not yet articulated any particular priorities for education or skills in the post-2015 landscape, but they have promoted something close to what we term 'basic principles' for post-2015 across the whole development agenda. Their five 'Key Messages' emphasise the unfinished business of the MDGs; the value of over-arching frameworks such as the Millennium Declaration and the 'World Fit for Children' UN Resolution; the requirement for any new goals to be universally applicable; and for them to be responsible to the natural environment. A fifth message underlines the interactivity of investment in people and in the productive sector: 'Economic growth and human development reinforce and are necessary for each other' (UNICEF, 2012: 4). UNICEF draws on the 'returns to education' literature to make the case that 'Effective, sustained and broad-based investments in children are the basis for a productive adult workforce and for skilled, capable entrepreneurs', but it is crucial that they emphasise 'effective' investment, since it is clear that mere years of education, regardless of quality, do not have some semi-automatic impact on productivity.

UNICEF does not translate these basic principles into a series of very specific goals, but its 'Suggested Actions' do include a strong concern for dealing with disparities worldwide;

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<sup>49</sup> Illustrative of the temptation to explore this wider role is 'Critical areas identified that will be further investigated include: Revisiting the paradigms of learning to be, learning to do, learning to know and learning to live together and lifelong learning' (Ibid. 11), - a reference to the Delors Report (Delors et al. 1998).

hence the idea of a 'goal or goals on inequality' (ibid. 5). Their other actions cover the vital importance of national and sub-national monitoring of any future goals; the role of young people in setting the development agenda; accountability mechanisms to allow governments to be held to account; and the need for innovative strategies to take account of future emergencies.

Thus education does appear quite centrally in these 'key messages', but principally in its potential to interact with economic growth.

UNICEF's post-2015 education focus areas are hinted at elsewhere. For example, following the August 2012 release of a joint UNESCO-UNICEF report on ECCE [early childhood care and education] in the Asia-Pacific region, it was stated in the UNICEF press release that 'UNICEF and UNESCO hope the report will be used... to campaign for the inclusion of ECCE in the post 2015 development goals'.<sup>50</sup>

### *The World Bank*

There does not appear – yet – to be any explicit World Bank statement or position on their post-2015 education and skills priorities. But it is clear from the recent actions of the World Bank – in terms of programmes, analytical and strategic work - that both education and skills are issues that remain a central development concern.

For instance, in 2011 the World Bank came out with its new ten year Education Strategy (to 2020), *Learning for All* (World Bank, 2011), and a brief examination of this can tell us something about the likely official post-2015 position the Bank may take, even if 'post-2015' is not referred to in the Strategy. The World Bank's focus on learning is out of recognition that 'growth, development, and poverty reduction depend on the knowledge and skills that people acquire' (ibid.: 3). In addition to the direct focus on learning outcomes, the *Learning for All* strategy promotes issues which indirectly or directly impact on the achievement of these outcomes, including: access and equity, effective learning environments (quality), and lifelong learning. The Bank makes it clear that its focus on learning refers to 'all learning opportunities... whether within or outside of formal education institutions' (ibid.: 29), public or private, 'from preschool to universities and training programs' (ibid.: 26). Learning outcomes, for the Bank, refers not only to the "3Rs", but to soft-skills (teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving etc) and to 'specific technical or vocational skills related to an occupation' (ibid.: 26). To underline the Bank's interest in learning, it is also a partner of the 'Global Compact on Learning'.<sup>51</sup>

### *The European Union*

In Europe, the European Commission (EC) has been running a public consultation ('Towards a post-2015 development framework') since mid-June 2012. It will end in mid-September 2012, and submissions will be made available on the Commission's site, possibly in summary form. The approach of the Commission to this exercise is very different indeed to those institutions proposing very particular goals or organizing frameworks, such as a millennium learning goal. Instead, they claim that the consultation is wide open when it comes to possible options:

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<sup>50</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/rosa/media\\_7857.htm](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/media_7857.htm)

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.globalcompactonlearning.org/partnership/>

This debate gives rise to different options and scenarios to be considered for post-2015. None of them can be excluded at this early stage. Options could either be designed following the logic of the MDG framework with new time-lines, with or without new goals, targets or indicators, or proposing a more fundamentally revised approach to development (EC, 2012b: 1)

The consultation is also rather demanding as it asks some 18 questions around the following four themes: The MDGs: benefits and limitations; Feasibility of a future framework; The potential scope of a future framework; The potential shape of a future framework. Respondees are encouraged not to write more than eight pages in all. But the questions are in fact quite complex as can be seen in just a couple:

How could a future framework support improved policy coherence for development, at global, EU and country levels?  
Should it be based on goals, targets and indicators? If any, should goals have an outcome or sector focus? Please give reasons for your answer. (ibid)

Doubtless, a number of stake-holders will contribute to this process, whether NGOs, think tanks, international institutions, and even governments. It will be interesting to hear more of the participation process, and in due course assess the position on post-2015 reached by the Commission.

The European Training Foundation (ETF), as an EU agency, does not have an independent position or paper on skills post-2015. With regard to the EU, several existing policy documents exist which related directly or indirectly to education and skills that run beyond 2015 already. The most relevant<sup>52</sup> would be the Europe 2020 strategy,<sup>53</sup> and the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).<sup>54</sup> In addition, the Director General for Education and Culture is finalizing a communication on Rethinking Skills in the context of Europe 2020.<sup>55</sup>

#### *International Labour Organisation (ILO)*

The first thematic consultation on the post-2015 development agenda on structural change, productive capacities, and employment took place in Tokyo in mid-May 2012, and was organized by the ILO and UNDP (UNDP-ILO, 2012).<sup>56</sup>

With regard to the post-2015 framework, the consensus reached for education and skills was that the education MDGs should be retained, but that the quality of education should also be considered. Regarding TVET, it was noted that the post-2015 framework needed to

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<sup>52</sup> The authors are grateful to Peter Greenwood of ETF for pointing these out.

<sup>53</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)

<sup>54</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-framework\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-framework_en.htm)

<sup>55</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/amp/doc/eac\\_mp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/amp/doc/eac_mp_en.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/events/setting-development-agenda-beyond-2015/lang--en/index.htm>

[http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/events/WCMS\\_184041/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/events/WCMS_184041/lang--en/index.htm)

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_185832.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_185832.pdf)

somehow 'ensure the quality of training... as well as certification for trained people. [And that] industries need to get involved to improve the quality and relevance of technical training' (UNDP-ILO, 2012: 4). It was suggested at this thematic consultation that there might even be a post-2015 goal related to 'technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills' (UNDP-ILO, 2012: 6), with targets and indicators based around 'access to quality technical, vocational and entrepreneurial training, as well as certification as a result of such training' (ibid.).

The ILO also led on a thematic think piece on employment for the UN task team on the post-2015 agenda (ILO, 2012b), but this made almost no reference to the role of education and skills.

#### *Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, June 2012*

One of the most concrete outcomes from the Rio+20 conference was an agreement on a process for developing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2013. As noted above, a key question and point of concern is how the SDGs and the Post-2015 development agenda will work together. While there were obviously no specific goals related to education or skills coming out of Rio+20, a concern for this paper is how education and skills development will feature in this relationship going forward – and what goals might emerge.

The Rio+20's zero *draft* outcome document, *The Future We Want*, was criticised for not recognizing the vital role that education plays in achieving sustainable development (Adams, 2012; Anderson, 2012). However, the non-binding final Summit Outcome Document, *The Future we Want* (UN, 2012d), does have a small section on education amongst a multitude of other topics, and it does contain over 30 references to 'education' and 7 to 'skills', and has specific mention of 'education for sustainable development'. Education was an often-mentioned mechanism for internalizing the principles of sustainable development through primary, secondary and adult learning, both formal and informal. Both access and quality at the primary and post-primary levels of education were cited in the outcome document. Access to 'job skills' training programs, including for agriculture and the green economy were also mentioned, as was the issue of lifelong learning. Below are some of the specific mentions related to education and skills in the Rio+20 outcome document (UN, 2012d, emphasis added):

- '**Universal access** to primary education.' (p.43)
- 'Full access to **quality** education at all levels.' (p.43)
- '**Equity of access** to education (for marginalised groups): 'equal access to education for persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, local communities, ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas' (p.43). 'Equal access of women and girls to education' (p.45)
- '**Better quality and access** to education **beyond the primary level.**' (p.43)
- '**Improve the capacity of... education systems** to prepare people to pursue sustainable development' (e.g. via teacher training, sustainability curricula, use of ICT) (p.43)
- 'training and education to improve agricultural productivity' (p.22)
- 'equal access to opportunities to acquire job skills' (p.29)
- Skills for the green economy (p.11, 29)
- Lifelong learning: 'workers should have access to education, skills...' (p.29)

Of course, there are no specific SDGs developed yet, and so we don't know what prominence education and/or skills might finally get, or how these mentions of education will translate into anything concrete.

*The report of the UN High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, January 2012*

In August 2010, the UN Secretary-General launched a High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP); the main output of the GSP (which has now ceased functioning)<sup>57</sup> was a January 2012 report, *Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future worth Choosing* (GSP, 2012). This report was one of the main inputs to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio 2012), noted above.

While this panel was obviously not exclusively concerned with education, the *Resilient People, Resilient Planet* report mentions education and skills for sustainable development as one of the key priority action points. It makes specific mention of 'secondary and vocational education, and [the] building of skills to help ensure that all of society can contribute to solutions that address today's challenges and capitalise on opportunities (ibid.: 6).

The report has several pages dedicated to 'education and skills for sustainable development' (p.30-33), in which it notes that:

- 'Primary education for all, in particular, is a precondition for sustainable development' (p.30).
- 'While primary education is the foundation of development, post-primary and secondary education and vocational training are as crucial in building a sustainable future' (p.31).
- 'Technical and vocational training is essential for growth... [and] a country's sustainable development... [Such] training in all sectors has to be relevant, affordable, accessible and given by qualified and certified practitioners' (p.31).

The Panel then goes on to make several recommendations concerning education and skills for sustainable development. Recommendation 4 is to set up a global fund for education, that evolves from the current Global Partnership for Education.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The work of the GSP was completed at the end of July 2012, following publication of its report and a series of outreach activities in the lead-up to and at the Rio+20 Conference. <http://www.un.org/gsp/>

<sup>58</sup> On this, see a report by Gordon Brown (Brown, 2012).

Recommendation 5 of the High Level Panel relates explicitly to education and skills to 2015 and beyond:

Governments should scale up their efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 on universal primary education by 2015, and establish a goal of providing universal access to quality post-primary and secondary education no later than 2030, emphasizing the skills and knowledge needed for sustainable growth and jobs. (p.31)

Further, recommendation 6 noted that it is important for all stakeholders to ‘work together to provide vocational training, retraining and professional development within the context of lifelong learning geared to filling skills shortages in sectors essential to sustainable development’ (p.31).

It remains to be seen how this report will inform positioning of education and skills with regard to formulation of sustainable development goals.

#### *The Global Partnership for Education*

In the lead-up to the June 2012 Global Partnership for Education (GPE)<sup>59</sup> Board of Directors meeting,<sup>60</sup> GPE partners<sup>61</sup> were asked – among other issues - for input into the role that the GPE should play ‘in helping to frame the post-2015 agenda for education’ (GPE, 2012c: 36). The response was quite clear:

There was a strong view (with a few individual exceptions) across the partnership that GPE should be very involved in the shaping of the post-2015 agenda, acting as a convener, evidence-based advocate, knowledge sharer, participant in global political processes and representative of the whole Global Partnership. (ibid)

Specifically, while GPE partners said that there was still ‘commitment to [the] EFA Goals’ (GPE, 2012b:7), there is clear recognition in the agreed goals (below) that the international community needs to go beyond EFA to have more focus on quality, equity and strengthening education systems. Moreover, the majority of GPE partners agreed that GPE financing should expand beyond basic education (GPE, 2012b).

This being said, it was openly acknowledged by the GPE, that it ‘has been much harder to garner feedback from developing country partners and CSOs’ (GPE, 2012b: 14); thus it is not at all clear whether these southern countries agree with the GPE line on post-2015 issues. Only 46 developing countries are GPE partners of course; of these only 12 responded to the GPE questions about its strategic direction (GPE, 2012b).

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<sup>59</sup> Formerly known as the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) on Education for All.

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.globalpartnership.org/berlin-2012>

<sup>61</sup> GPE partners include: 46 developing countries, and over 30 bilateral, regional, and international agencies, development banks, the private sector, private foundations, think tanks, teachers, and local and global civil society groups.

The goals that were agreed to by the board (GPE, 2012a) may also be indicative of the GPE post-2015 focus areas. These included:

- **Access for All:** All children have access to a safe, adequately equipped space to receive an education, with a skilled teacher.
- **Learning for All:** All children master basic literacy and numeracy skills by the early grades.
- **Reaching Every Child:** Resources are focused on the most marginalised children and those in fragile and conflict-affected states.
- **Building for the Future:** National systems have the capacity and integrity to deliver, support and assess quality education for all.

It may be interesting to note that in the background documents prepared for the Board meeting (GPE, 2012b, c), the above four goals were suggested to be in effect until 2021 (i.e. 6 years after 2015). However, the 2021 date was omitted from the 'final decisions' document (GPE, 2012a).

What the GPE Board meeting in June 2012 also made clear is that there should still be significant focus on the period before 2015. The Board agreed on 5 objectives for the period 2012-2015 (GPE, 2012a) (Box 3).

### **Box 3. GPE Agreed Objectives 2012-2015**

**Objective 1:** Fragile and conflict-affected states able to develop and implement their education plans.

**Objective 2:** All girls in GPE-endorsed countries successfully complete primary school and go to secondary school in a safe, supportive learning environment.

**Objective 3:** Dramatic increase in the number of children learning and demonstrating mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills by Grade 3.

**Objective 4:** Improve teacher effectiveness by training, recruiting and retaining teachers and supporting them to provide a good quality education.

**Objective 5:** Expand the volume, effectiveness, efficiency and equitable allocation of external and domestic funding and support to education in GPE-endorsed countries.

Source: GPE (2012a)

### *World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council (WEF-GAC)*

In April 2012, the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Benchmarking Progress elaborated a new possible post-2015 approach in their report *Getting to Zero: Finishing the Job the MDGs Started* (WEF-GAC, 2012).

The 'getting to zero' notion is quite straightforward, but potentially quite powerful. While most of the current MDGs talk about making improvements – halving the % in poverty, halving the % hungry, reducing by two-thirds under-five mortality rate etc – a 'getting to

zero' framework sets absolute targets for ending poverty, hunger etc within a generation (defined as being 'by 2030').<sup>62</sup>

In a section of their paper, sub-titled *Concerns and Areas Where the Next Generation Goals Need to Improve*, the WEF-GAC makes several comments regarding education, under 'missing and emerging priorities':

**Secondary education.** The [Millennium Development] Goals' emphasis on primary education has been justly criticized for diverting attention away from secondary and tertiary education. This needs to be addressed through any post-2015 framework.

**Quality issues, especially for education.** Many analysts worry that the emphasis on quantity has diluted efforts at ensuring quality. This is of greatest concern in the area of education, where enrollment jumps can be uncorrelated or even negatively linked with students' learning outcomes. Future development goals will need to tackle the core challenge of learning. (p.12)

The paper then goes on to outline what the targets for a new post-MDG 'Goal of education for all' might look like, along with seven other proposed goals. The four targets mentioned include: 'a zero target for illiteracy'; a 'target for universal secondary education'; an 'ambitious target for post-secondary education (e.g, 20 percent)'; and, a 'target for learning outcomes' (p.15). Equally, the 'getting to zero' notion presumably implies that there should be targets related to primary education, where there are still currently 61m primary age children out of school (UNESCO-UIS, 2012). It can be seen that 'Getting to zero' involves some really major numbers, and not least the more than 900 million adult illiterates. The target for learning outcomes would necessarily be different from the other three targets, but the very proposal raises key issues about what success would consist of.<sup>63</sup>

### **3.4.3. Proposals on Education and Skills Beyond 2015, associated with bilateral agencies**

There would appear to be a very considerable difference in bilateral agency engagement with post-2015 as compared with several of the multilateral responses just reviewed. As we shall see below, some have set up special post-2015 units, whilst others have not yet become involved in identifying their approach. Where possible, we shall refer to evidence of policy relating to education or to skills.

We have only approached a small number of bilaterals, and have merely sought to get the flavour of their knowledge about and engagement with the post-2015 debates. Here, for example is one European government development agency reaction:

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<sup>62</sup> The 'getting to zero' approach should not 'be constrained by a literal interpretation of zero' (WEF-GAC, 2012: 15); in other words, it is recognized that it is not possible to literally get to zero on some issues (ie. numbers out of school, child mortality rates etc).

<sup>63</sup> An illustration of a learning outcomes target can be taken from the Jomtien Framework: 'Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort ( e.g. 80% of 14 year olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement' (UNESCO, WCEFA, 1990: 3).

We are still in the process of trying to keep track of the avalanche of reports, seminars and processes relating to the post 2015 MDG agenda. We will contribute to the EU open consultation and further to the ongoing international debates in EU and UN. No options or decisions on concrete sectoral or thematic priorities have been taken at this stage. So it is premature to try giving an answer to the question. (communication to King, 21.08.12)

A very different reaction can be found in another European government development agency:

I simply don't know why, but there is, however, absolutely no interest in the government's development agency for a post-2015 agenda. The NGOs have an interest, but this seems at present to include just about everything in a not very focused discussion. (Communication to King, 21.08.12)

In the case of Japan, it appears that the main focus for many policy people is the next Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), due to be held in June 2013 in Yokohama, rather than the post-2015 agenda. It has already been agreed that the main focus of TICAD V will be on the acceleration of economic growth; hence health and education which were foci of TICAD IV will not be central in the coming year. Nevertheless, Japan's stance regarding post-2015 will be basically similar to that towards TICAD V, even if the details have not been worked out. This is an interesting illustration of the Japan-Africa framework taking some precedence over and influencing the post-2015 debate. On the other hand, Japan does still expect to be recommending that learning for all in primary school, and expansion of secondary schools should be the targets of post-2015 (Communication to King, 22.08.12).

Norway, by contrast, appears to have taken a more pro-active line than several of its European partners, already mentioned. Again, a national branch of the international NGO, Save the Children (Redd Barna in Norway) has taken the initiative in organizing a series of four open seminars around the theme of 'Into the Future: the Next Generation Development Goals', and, significantly, the Minister for International Development is expected to be involved as a panelist in two of them, and senior officials in the others. The same pro-active stance may be true of Sweden, whose Director General of Sida is on the Secretary General's High Level Panel.

Two key bilateral donors to education, USAID and DFID have not publically elaborated their post-2015 position with regard to education and skills. However, it is possible to suggest their most likely interest areas based on recent reports and strategy documents.

In the case of USAID, their Education Strategy 2011-2015 (USAID, 2011), which has the title *Opportunity through Learning*, very clearly signals the agencies' interest in the learning agenda. While there is no direct mention in the strategy of USAID's post-2015 focus areas, their strategic goals up to 2015 may provide some signals as to what their subsequent priorities may be. The strategic goals to 2015 include: improved primary grade reading skills, improved workforce skills through tertiary and vocational/technical programs, and increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments:

- The focus on primary grade reading skills is based on the acknowledgement that 'for many students in low-income countries, very little learning is occurring in the

classroom’ (USAID, 2011: 9), as well as that learning outcomes are linked to economic growth.

- The focus on vocational/technical programs and tertiary education is based on the recognition of the ‘need for higher levels of education and cognitive skills beyond a primary education’ (p.12).
- The focus on equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments is driven by the fact that the majority of out of school primary age children live in such contexts.

Even if USAID has not publicly declared on education post-2015, its support of early grade reading assessments (EGRA) in many developing countries is intimately connected to the ‘discovery’ of learning, or rather the discovery of low or no learning. The sheer scale of these EGRA assessments needs to be underlined. They point to a concern with learning and with assessment in primary schools, however, rather than in early childhood education.

DFID’s post-2015 position on education and skills is also not publicly available yet. However, as noted above, the UK is in a unique position with regard to both the overall post-2015 framework, as well as global education issues. The current PM, David Cameron, is one of the three co-chairs of the 2015 High Level Panel, and the former PM, Gordon Brown, heads the High Level Panel on Education, is the UN Special Envoy for Education and is a panel member of the new UN Education First Initiative. For its part, DFID has set up a Post-2015 Unit within the organization.

In 2010, DFID developed an education strategy 2010-2015, subtitled *Learning For All* (DFID, 2010), but this never became official policy after the change of government in 2010. But, as with USAID, learning is clearly at the heart of DFID’s interest. This is further evidenced by DFID’s involvement as a partner of the ‘Global Compact on Learning’, and as a member of the Task Force associated with this.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, in addition to a focus on learning outcomes, DFID’s other currently stated education priority areas include access, girls’ education, post-primary (secondary, tertiary, vocational skills), and fragile states.<sup>65</sup>

#### **3.4.4. Proposals on Education and Skills Beyond 2015, associated with civil society and think-tanks**

*Results for Development Institute (R4D) and education post-2015*

A May 2012 report by R4D, *A Learning Goal for Education? Scoping for MDG2 Post-2015* (Burnett, 2012a), was produced for the Hewlett Foundation. It identifies a range of stakeholders who are involved with assessing learning. These include:

- International school-based learning assessments - PISA (OECD plus), PIRLS, TIMMS, SACMEQ (East/Southern Africa), PASEC (West Africa), LLECE (Latin America);
- International population-based learning assessments - International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), largely for OECD countries, and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics’ Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP);

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.globalcompactonlearning.org/partnership/>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Key-Issues/Education/>

- Civil society-led assessments of learning in primary school; e.g. ASER in India and Pakistan and by Uwezo in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda;
- UNESCO's General Education Quality Diagnostic/Analysis and Monitoring Framework includes learning, and is being piloted in 5 countries (including China and South Africa);
- Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA), focused on skills at Grade 2 or 3, promoted by USAID and, more recently, the GPE and DFID;
- The World Bank System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER) benchmarking tool – contains a student assessment module;
- The 'Global Compact on Learning' task force on learning indicators. (ibid: 5-6)

Burnett comments that the current initiatives underway that are relevant to learning measurement largely 'reflect Northern concerns about learning in the South' (Burnett, 2012a: 6). The learning lobby, in other words, appears to be very northern-based. Burnett's comment is backed up by the outcomes of discussions that Burnett had with developing country ministers of education and with multilateral and bilateral donors.

Burnett contacted 21 ministers of education (from Asia, Africa and Latin America – with only one from the Middle East) to assess their interest in a learning goal. Almost all agreed that learning was a priority. However, when asked 'for their top three priorities, only two mentioned learning... the leading topics being secondary education, skills for employment and teacher salaries and qualifications' (p.8).

Meanwhile, Burnett's discussion with 7 multilateral and bilateral donors (head of education or of human development level) revealed that 'all... thought that it [learning] should at a minimum be considered for inclusion in any future goals' (p.9).

Towards the end of this report for the Hewlett Foundation Burnett comments that:

In sum, there is no standard measurable indicator of learning at the primary school level that can currently be used across countries. Nor is one likely to be developed rapidly. Any learning goal will likely therefore have to utilize different measures of learning for different countries.

... prospects are not good for a learning goal. While learning is high on everyone's education agenda [in the North], education itself is not necessarily high on the global agenda and there is no agreement on how to include learning within any education goals. (p.10)

To conclude, he ends on the more upbeat note by saying that 'a learning goal is not impossible' (ibid), and outlines several steps that need to be taken for this to come to fruition, including steps to try to ensure that education appears (at all) in the post-MDG framework (ie. making the case for education's link to other development goals, more lobbying, and better global leadership on education), and – since universal measurement of learning is not that feasible - being flexible about country setting of learning goals.

R4D has a second key report on our topic. The August 2012 report by R4D on *Post-2015 Education MDGs* (Burnett and Felsman, 2012) was very specifically undertaken, despite the title, to develop the evidence base concerning progress on the MDGs and EFA goals to 2015 and beyond. As far as progress on either set of goals is concerned, we have already quoted

their report to illustrate that there had allegedly been more progress on the education-related MDG front than on most of the EFA goals. This is a rather intriguing claim because it is also said that two of the MDGs overlap with the EFA goals; indeed that two of the EFA goals are actually 'roughly the same as' the two MDGs (Burnett and Felsman, 2012: 1). In other words, the claim should really be that there has been 'considerable progress' towards the MDG and EFA goals of universal primary education and of gender parity at all levels of education.

This may seem to be just an editorial quibble, but it would in fact be correct to state that there might appear to be more progress on the education MDGs than on the EFA goals, since the EFA goals of UPE and gender parity are not the same as the education MDGs; the EFA goals both include 'of good quality' in their formulation.

Be that as it may, the report goes on to admit that there are very substantial deficits in progress with both the education MDGs and the EFA goals. Notably, there are almost 800 million adult illiterates, progress towards universal enrolment in primary is slowing, and the quality of education is 'alarmingly low' in many countries (ibid. 6).

From the viewpoint of this review, the key section in the report is 'Moving towards the post-2015 education agenda' (pp. 20-23). This is a frank and honest assessment of the present state of play, and it is informed by an analysis of the 'Current education debates' (pp. 8-17) to which we shall briefly return. The report identifies some areas of consensus and other areas of no agreement. But critically it admits that even where there is consensus 'it is relatively limited as the bulk of developing countries have yet to engage with international thinking about the post-2015 agenda, either in general or in education specifically' (ibid. 20).

Although there is not yet any global consensus, the report enumerates some domains of agreement, amongst the predominantly northern stakeholders, for post-2015 education MDGs. These include: Retaining education in the MDGs; Retaining but reformulating the current Education MDGs, e.g. to include secondary within basic education; Refocusing on learning rather than enrolment; Remembering a priority for equity; Re-emphasising measurement and monitoring (including of the EFA GMR process); and Repackaging global goals with country-determined targets.

Where there is much less agreement is on how education might fare depending on whether the MDG framework continues, or whether a framework driven by SDGs might prevail; What the timeframe should be; How any learning goal should be assessed and at what stage in the education process; Whether universal literacy could really be accepted as a global indicator; What accountability mechanisms could be adopted; and whether goals could be linked to likely funding attractiveness (ibid. 22-23).

R4D's report also has a useful assessment of the 'current education debates' which is really about 'Post-2015 education debates'. This analyses the various horses in the education post-2015 race. It acknowledges that 'Learning' is dominating at least the Northern debate about new goals, and particularly because of the impact of the Global Compact on Learning (see below). What is not said in the Report however is that the emergence of 'Learning' has been associated with a very widespread critique, mostly by the North, of educational achievement in the South. This was very obvious in the case made for the Millennium Learning Goal by Filmer et al. (2006). If 'Learning' is to be supported in any next

development agenda, it will have to be seen as something not just affecting the developing world.

'Equity' is a second powerful candidate for inclusion. It is the explanation, in large part, for why there are more than 60 million children out of school in 2010, why millions more drop out, and even why there are deficits in learning. It also is a key factor in explaining the presence of 800 million illiterate adults (Burnett and Felsman op.cit.11). Moreover, equity is clearly not just a developing country issue. The problem is, however, that it is not exclusively an educational issue but applies to any of the likely development goals.

Two other horses in the post-2015 race are secondary education<sup>66</sup> and skills & competencies. The former is said not to be very high on the donor agenda, though it is clearly high on the government agenda of the poorer nations as we heard in R4D's first report. Skills are certainly back on the agenda (ibid), but they cover so many possibilities that there is still no clear priority focus for skills in the R4D report; school skills are mentioned along with 'life skills', work skills, '21<sup>st</sup> century skills', TVET and 'other innovative skills training models' (ibid).

A further horse mentioned in the report is Education itself (ibid 14). It is reported that the sector is no longer a high priority in development circles, partly because (wrongly) the education MDGs are thought to have been already implemented, and partly because other areas like growth and job creation are seen to be much more visible on the global development paradigm. These latter do of course appear as one-world priorities.

Faced with these dilemmas and lack of global consensus, the report does point to the growing body of evidence of how crucially important education investment is for many other developments. We shall return to consider this 'Education link' (cf Adams, 2012) case. But if the strongest horse in the race is Learning, is there not the possibility of reformulating the Universal Primary Education goal (of the MDGs, Dakar and Jomtien) to take care of this?

Though this is not argued in the R4D report, it would be possible to return to the Jomtien formulation which of course did strongly include learning achievement and it did also leave open the option that basic education could include secondary.<sup>67</sup> So a revised goal, with the legitimization of the past, could be possible such as:

Universal basic education with attainment of defined levels of necessary learning achievement.

Before leaving the useful R4D report, we should mention that its final recommendations do not include any specific goals, but rather some key issues to bear in mind, whatever the process to be followed. First among these is the need for developing countries to be included more in the post-2015 education discussions, and for education itself to be retained in the general post-2015 discussions. Second, there is a warning that the technical attractiveness of particular approaches (e.g. standardised measurement of learning) needs

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<sup>66</sup> Higher education is also noted, but it has scarcely entered the post-2015 education debate.

<sup>67</sup> Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or whatever higher level of education is considered as "basic") by the year 2000; and: Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e. g. 80% of 14 year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement (Framework for Action, 3).

to be set against their political intelligibility. Third, any new goals need to be focused on equity, and therefore on what is being learnt amongst the poorest in the lower quintiles of income, and not on averages.

In summary, this report acknowledges that the debate on education post-2015 has been driven by the North, and has thus far been little engaged in by the developing world. The report has not promoted a particular education goal or goals, but has been more of a status report on both the education MDGs and the EFA. This makes it very different from those reports that are strongly advocating special goals, targets and processes. And of these few are more visible than the Brookings' *Global Compact on Learning* to which we now turn.

#### *Brookings' Global Compact on Learning (2011)*

The Brookings' *Global Compact*, briefly referred to above, is a powerfully written advocacy document. Reminiscent of Philip Coombs' terminology in *The World Educational Crisis* (1968), it dramatically describes the current challenges to education as being 'nothing short of a global learning crisis' (Brookings, 2011: 3). In Jomtien-style terms it talks of the need for 'an expanded learning agenda'. It also declares the vital importance of 'shifting the global education paradigm toward the goal of learning for all as the new minimum threshold'. This conjures up memories of Coombs' 'Minimum essential learning needs' from the 1970s (ICED, 1973; King, 1976). Indeed, Coombs' 'functional literacy and numeracy', 'functional knowledge and skills for earning a living', for understanding the processes of nature and for civic participation etc are not dissimilar to the three priority areas of the Brookings' *Compact*.

But the central message of the *Compact* is 'Learning for All' rather than 'Education for All'. Even though the Education MDGs of access and gender parity may appear to be closer to achievement than other MDGs, the reality is universal primary education cannot be achieved without evidence of pupils learning. And there is a great deal of critical evidence that they are not. Indeed, millions are leaving school without learning. A litany of illustrations of learning failure in many different regions of the world is recorded; it is particularly dreadful for the poorer rural and urban sections of society, and for countries in conflict.

It is salutary that the *Compact* finally puts paid to the idea that mere years of education, regardless of school quality, translate into individual income: '...recent international evidence shows that learning levels matter more than years in school for individual wages, health outcomes, and national economic growth' (Brookings, 2011: 2).<sup>68</sup> It is also salutary that the *Compact* recognises that schooling, even of good quality, is not something that can be fixed up in the education sector alone; it depends on an enabling environment with political commitment supporting equity, participation, accountability and protection (ibid. 14).<sup>69</sup>

The centrality of learning, as opposed to merely being in school, is so much the sole focus of

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<sup>68</sup> Paradoxically, the old claim, derived from Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002), still turns up in the *Compact*: 'In developing countries, one additional year of education adds about 10 percent to a person's earnings' (Brookings, 2011: 1). But this is against the spirit of the whole report.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of the crucial role of the enabling environment in education, see King and Palmer (2006).

the *Compact* that there is very little discussion of other options for post-2015. Indeed, the term 'post-2015' is scarcely mentioned at all except to state that one of the key milestones in implementing the *Compact* will be 'enshrining the goal of learning for all in the post-2015 global agenda' (ibid. 8). Thus, when it comes to laying out the three dimensions of the *Compact's* priorities - early childhood development, literacy and numeracy in lower primary, and relevant post-primary education opportunities - there is no attempt to fit them into a new framework for either the Education MDGs or the six EFA Dakar goals.

Compared to the very compelling case for adopting learning as one of the critical outcomes of schooling, the identification of how competencies are actually to be identified and measured is potentially much more demanding. This process is currently underway through a consultation about a draft framework of 'Proposed Competencies for Learning Outcomes: Early Childhood, Primary, and Post-primary'. This is being handled by a Learning Metrics Task Force linking the Centre for Universal Education of Brookings with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

An illustration of the kind of goal being proposed by the Global Compact and its Task Force may be drawn from Priority 3: Providing Post-Primary Education Opportunities. This overall goal is then divided into two strategies, one of which is concerned with reducing the barriers to post-primary, and the second with ensuring that post-primary education 'prepares young people for healthy lives, productive work, and civic participation' (Brookings, 2011: 38). For this strategy, the main actions to be taken are the following:

- Strengthen the link between post-primary education and improved life and labour opportunities.
- Teach transferable skills.
- Facilitate school-to-work and school-to-higher education transitions. (ibid)

However, when this set of post-primary actions is translated into domains and sub-domains for competencies to be developed, then there are following five domains: communication, numeracy, interaction, problem-solving and workplace skills; and there are no less than 18 sub-domains, and again for illustrative purposes workplace skills contains: self-direction; quality of work; skill development; and reliability. (Brookings, 2012: 7). Again, if for example, workplace skills is broken down into what are called 'illustrative outcomes', then there are several: Shows self-direction and initiative in educational and workplace efforts; Able to turn ideas into action; Ensures high quality of work; Develops and maintains appropriate skill levels; Demonstrates reliability and effective use of time (ibid.)

If then it is intended within the domain of workplace skills, to measure the sub-domain of skill development, and, within that, the development and maintenance of appropriate skills levels, it will not be easy to do so without going back to the main text of the Compact on Learning and analysing what approach the report takes to skills development. There it is immediately clear that the preferred kind of skills development is the teaching of transferable skills, 'such as critical thinking, communications, teamwork, and strong work ethics'. In addition to these 'life skills', it is argued that young people need information and communication technology skills (ICT), financial literacy, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education (Brookings, 2011: 39-40).

This is a pretty tall order in terms of assessment, and when it is recalled that this is just one of the dimensions of the goal of Post-Primary Education Opportunities, it can be readily

seen that the assessment of learning goals may prove to be rather complex. Putting it another way, making the case for learning goals is one thing, and the Compact has made a very powerful case for that. Translating those learning priorities into readily usable assessment instruments is a very different matter. We shall follow with interest the Task Force's consultative process of dealing with this.

*Education's Inter-sectoral Role in the Post-2015 Debate: The Education Link*

While Results for Development (R4D) discussed a number of the main 'horses' in the education post-2015 race, and the Compact derived its series of priorities for learning goals from the widespread failures in educational achievement, a third approach to the promotion of education in the future MDG agenda is to examine its potential influence on other sectoral frameworks. One paper that illustrates this salience of education in other development frameworks is Anda Adams's *The Education Link: Why Learning is Central to the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda* (Adams, 2012).

Of course, the idea that education contributes to other development goals has a long history, and has been associated particularly with World Bank research since the very early 1980s. For instance, the World Bank's Education Sector Policy Paper (1980) had as its first chapter 'Relationship between Education and Development' (Ibid. 12-15). It argued that education was not only a basic human need but also a means of meeting other basic needs, as well as 'an activity that sustains and accelerates overall development' (Ibid. 13). Over 20 years later, the first independent Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) had as its first chapter: "'Education for All" is Development', and it too rehearsed the key relationships between 'Education and other development goals' (UNESCO, 2002: 30-35).

Adams claims that one of the weaknesses in the current MDG framework of eight goals is that they have tended to be viewed as a series of silos, and the cross-cutting issues such as the impact of health on education and vice versa have not been pursued. Another weakness which has been central to this paper is that the education MDGs were not concerned with learning, or with the acquisition of skills and knowledge, but rather with indicators of access and completion of primary school.

In an interesting exploration of education's cross-sectoral potential, Adams argues that there is potentially a crucial 'education link' in many of the development frameworks being discussed in the context of the post-2015 debate. She identifies seven such approaches: ending absolute poverty; equity and inclusion; economic growth and jobs; getting to zero; global minimum entitlements; sustainable development; and well-being and quality of life. It will be useful to examine a few of these in their relation with education, as this provides a different but possibly powerful additional rationale for making education a key post-2015 goal. It should be stressed, however, that the education link should illustrate the impact of effective learning of skills and knowledge, and not just access and attendance in schools.

Thus in the framework of 'Ending Absolute Poverty', it is possible to make a strong case for education, but only if it is the kind of education that produces the skills and knowledge that facilitate participation in income generation or productive work. The idea that an additional year of education, regardless of quality, can contribute to income or wages is surely not

compelling.<sup>70</sup>

A similar point can be made about the framework of 'Equity and Inclusion'. Of course, here too education can have an impact, and especially in the early years. But any old education will not do the trick. Adams makes the point in respect of early intervention: 'High-quality early childhood development activities have long shown to have a lasting impact on learning' (Adams, 2012: 10).

When it comes to the crucially important framework of 'Economic Growth and Jobs', again there is a tension in the kind of case being made for educational impact. Arguably, skilled and well-educated workers are a key element in productivity, but that is different from the claim that schooling, regardless of quality, somehow automatically makes a difference to productivity. The dilemma can be seen in the following dichotomy: 'Thus, economic growth depends on an educated and skilled workforce. In developing countries, one additional year of education adds about 10 percent to a person's earnings' (ibid. 12).<sup>71</sup>

In the case of the framework for 'Sustainable Development', the key role of quality education rather than mere years of schooling is firmly underlined. Thus is it 'quality education' that impacts factors which affect sustainability. And it is 'critical thinking and problem-solving skills' that help young learners to make better decisions about their environment.

These are just four of the seven frameworks discussed in the paper, but we have said enough to affirm that there is a powerful case for educational impact on these frameworks, but that case is dependent on the approach to education-as-learning which we have noted in the *Compact*. Adams concludes her piece with a similar statement of faith in quality education:

Regardless of which global development framework is adopted for the post-2015 era, quality education and opportunities for learning will have a significant role to play in achieving global development goals. (Ibid. 22)

Thus far we have looked at some of the perspectives on post-2015 taken by UNESCO, as well as by Results for Development Institute, and Brookings. It may also be useful to provide a flavour of what other actors are thinking about the post-2015 window.

### *The Centre for International Governance Innovation*

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) convened a meeting in 2011 in Bellagio, Italy (CIGI, 2011), to discuss the post-2015 development framework; there was a follow up meeting in Paris in 2012 (CIGI, 2012). At the 2011 Bellagio meeting, 12 new (post-2015) development goals were proposed (sometimes referred to as the "Bellagio Goals"). One of these (goal 3) related to 'Appropriate education and skills for productive participation in

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<sup>70</sup> In an apparent contradiction, Adams makes the point that it is education in the sense of learning achievement that can break the intergenerational cycle of poverty; and then proceeds to claim that 'For each additional year of education, a person's wages increase an average of ten percent' (Adams, 2012: 9).

<sup>71</sup> Adams derives this claim from Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002)

society' (CIGI, 2011: 10). Participants agreed that indicators related to such a goal would need to address access, quality and learning outcomes. At the 2012 Paris meeting, the direct and indirect benefits of education were noted, and the enabling role that education plays in helping to achieve other development goals was acknowledged (CIGI, 2012). With respect to determining indicators for a post-2015 education goal, the Paris meeting concluded that (CIGI, 2012, emphasis added):

- 'indicators should extend beyond children to include **all age groups** of the population' (p.10).
- 'targets and indicators for the education goal should **focus on outcomes: learning, skills and literacy levels**' (p.10).
- '**Access indicators... should be extended** beyond primary enrollment to **primary completion**, and to enrollment and completion of **secondary and tertiary education**' (p.10).
- 'indicators should measure **quality, political commitment to education and equity** issues, and should be **disaggregated by gender**' (p.10).
- 'Despite these measurement challenges, **incorporating quality measures into the post-2015 goals is too important to omit**, and research should be accelerated for good baseline data and for measuring education quality' (p.10).

### *Save the Children*

Save the Children's post-2015 position paper, *After the Millennium Development Goals* (Save the Children, 2012a), while not specifically on education, does make it clear that this organization is strongly backing the integration of educational quality and learning in any post-2015 framework:

'accountability around universal education should not only be determined by increasing the percentage of children on enrolment lists, but should include increasing access to quality education and learning.' (Save the Children, 2012a: 10)

Indeed, Save the Children are planning to undertake 'advocacy strategies to increase US and global support for learning outcomes in the post 2015 framework'.<sup>72</sup>

The Save the Children education strategy 2012-2015 (Save the Children, 2012b) clearly emphasis their intention to 'shape[] the future of education goals in post-2015 global frameworks' (p.46).

Moreover, their strategic education objectives for the 2012-2015 period may be indicative of their likely focus areas for post-2015. The 2012-2015 objectives include basic education, education in emergencies, early childhood care and development, education for youth empowerment, and driving global and national policy change (Box 4).

#### **Box 4. Save the Children strategic education objectives for the 2012-2015**

-All children have access to a good quality basic education – especially those who are excluded and marginalised or living in conflict-affected fragile states.

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[http://www.umb.edu/editor\\_uploads/images/mgs/mgs\\_conflictres/Save\\_the\\_Children\\_MANAGER\\_I\\_OB\\_7-12.pdf](http://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/mgs/mgs_conflictres/Save_the_Children_MANAGER_I_OB_7-12.pdf)

-Children and youth at risk of, or affected by, emergencies have access to quality education as a fundamental part of all humanitarian responses.  
-An increased number of young children have access to quality early childhood care and development programmes that ensure their rights to survival, health and education.  
-To empower vulnerable youth in rural and urban areas through education and training to become active economic, social and political citizens.  
-To secure global and national policy change so that all children benefit from their right to a good quality education.

Source: Save the Children, 2012b

### *Hewlett Foundation*

Private foundations are increasingly playing a role in shaping (and funding) education development and planning, including for the post-2015 framework (IDS, 2012).

For example, in 2007 the Hewlett Foundation established the Quality Education in Developing Countries (QEDC) initiative 'to focus on ensuring that children learn.'<sup>73</sup> QEDC supports global advocacy and country initiatives to improve children's learning in six African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda) and India. It makes grants in three areas: measuring learning, improving instruction, and tracking resources.<sup>74</sup> So far, Hewlett has largely focused on the early grades and - only recently - are they looking at the pre-school part of early childhood care and development.

Regarding education post-2015, the 'Hewlett Foundation is for example involved in debates on giving a greater focus to quality and learning in a post-2015 framework' (Pauline Rose, 16.03.12).<sup>75</sup> They are also involved in funding research and think-pieces on post-2015, including for example:

- Burnett, N. (2012) *A Learning Goal for Education? Scoping for MDG2 Post-2015*. Report to Hewlett Foundation/Wellspring Advisors, 5 March 2012
- Melamed (2012) *After 2015. Contexts, Politics and Processes for a Post-2015 Global Agreement on Development*. ODI

### *Consultative Group (CG) on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECD)*

One of the documents which falls fairly and squarely into our category of lobbying for particular priorities is the CG one which quite explicitly seeks to place or position ECD on the post-2015 development agenda (see CGECCD, 2012). The paper thoughtfully lays out the wider context of the post MDG debate, and it argues for what may be called the 'ECD link' paralleling what Adams did with the 'Education link' above. In other words, it establishes connections between ECD investment and poverty reduction, sustainable development, child survival, nutrition, and primary school achievement. Somewhat surprisingly, it then admits that:

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<sup>73</sup> [http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/QEDC\\_Overview\\_-\\_English.pdf](http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/QEDC_Overview_-_English.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.hewlett.org/programs/global-development-program/quality-education-in-developing-countries>

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.globalisationanddevelopment.com/2012/03/post-2015-mdgs-already-again.html>

ECD is not one of the issues under current consideration for inclusion in the post-2015 development framework - neither as a goal, and indicator, a target, nor a subject for consideration as part of the framework in any form or fashion. This situation obtains despite the fact that ECD is in fact germane to the achievement of many of the priority outcomes that will feature on the post-2015 agenda. (CGECCD, 2012: 8)

However, it sees these various ECD linkages as being potential entry points for advocacy for ECD on the global agenda. It then proceeds to lay out an action plan for influencing key constituencies at the UN, National and Regional levels. But there is no reference to the wide range of agencies which do strongly support ECD. These would include: the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, Aga Khan, Save the Children, and WHO, to mention just a few. Interestingly, there is no mention of the fact that ECD has already also been powerfully located within the *Compact on Learning*, as one of its three priorities. Indeed, there is a whole chapter in the *Compact* on 'Priority 1: Focusing on the Crucial Early Childhood Years' (Brookings, 2011: 17-22). Equally, there is not sufficient recognition of the difference between getting ECD included in some dimension of any future MDG agenda, as opposed to revising ECD's existing place in the established Dakar goals.

#### **3.4.5. The Surprisingly Low Profile of Skills Development?**

Given the massive rise in youth unemployment in many OECD countries, and of millions of young people without decent work, whether formal or informal, in the developing world, it might be expected that some sort of skills goal could be on the next development agenda, with links made to productivity and economic growth.<sup>76</sup>

It is without doubt that technical and vocational skills have seen renewed interest in the last decade – from both developing country governments and donors (NORRAG News, 2011). From sub-Saharan Africa, to the Arab States, to Asia, to Latin America, there is significant government interest in the issue of skills for employment. The Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank and the World Bank are all ramping up their programmes related to technical and vocational skills development; and these are entities which – mostly – give loans (not grants) in response to country demand. For example, the World Bank's focus on 'skills and education programs and analytical work [has become]... much more intense over the last 2 years.... we have 21 countries in Africa, and many more in other regions, where skills and youth employment operations are implemented or are being developed' (World Bank official to King, 25.08.12).

In the various proposals for goals or for education priorities which we have already reviewed, there is much mention of foundational skills, social skills, life skills, transferable skills, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, even meta-cognitive skills, but a good deal less attention to work skills, including technical and vocational skills.

In the reports reviewed, skills and skills development did not appear at all in the UN task team's thematic paper on employment (ILO, 2012b); they did appear in the R4D report as school skills, life skills, work skills and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, but there was no clear focus in respect of post-2015. The same was true of the UNESCO Bangkok report which talked of

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<sup>76</sup> See the case made in King (2012): <http://norrags.wordpress.com/2012/06/04/the-post-2015-agenda-what-room-for-education-and-skills/>

many different skills and competencies, including ‘generic skills’ and ‘metacognitive skills’ (UNESCO-Bangkok, 2012: 3). The three priorities proposed by the *Compact on Learning* do include post-primary, and within that there is some consideration of skills. But these turn out to be mainly so-called ‘transferable skills’.

Both the report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP), and the subsequent Rio+20 conference did refer to ‘job skills’ and post-2015. The GSP recommended in their January 2012 report – as we noted earlier - that it was necessary to:

establish a goal of providing universal access to quality post-primary and secondary education no later than 2030, **emphasizing the skills and knowledge needed for sustainable growth and jobs.** (GSP, 2012: 31, emphasis added)

Later, in June 2012, the **Rio+20** outcomes document noted the importance of job skills, agricultural skills and “green economy” skills (UN, 2012d).

Below we provide a highlight of the few meetings and documents that have directly (or indirectly in the case of the UN ECOSOC) mentioned about TVET post-2015.

The 14-16<sup>th</sup> May 2012 **UNESCO Third International Congress on TVET** outcome statement called on the international community to: ‘Ensure better visibility and support for TVET as an integral part of the post-2015 international education and sustainable development agendas’ (UNESCO, 2012c: 5). Furthermore, in her address, the UNESCO Director General commented that ‘it is essential... we define the importance of skills in the post-2015 agenda’ (Bokova, 2012: 7).

The July 2012 Annual Ministerial Review of the **UN Economic and Social Council** (ECOSOC) recommended, among other things, that: ‘Productive capacities, employment, decent work and social protection should be made more prominent in the post-2015 development agenda’ (UN ECOSOC, 2012b: 25). Technical and vocational skills are regarded as being linked to the development of productive capacities, as well as to decent work and employment (ibid.).

As noted earlier, at the **first thematic consultation on the post-2015** development agenda, organised by the UNDP and ILO in Japan in May 2012, it was suggested at this thematic consultation that there might even be a post-2015 goal related to ‘technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills’ (UNDP-ILO, 2012: 6).

We should also note that the UNDG thematic consultations on the post-2015 development agenda include one consultation on education (which has not yet happened) – and that this education consultation will cover primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational.

The attention paid to work skills in the post-2015 framework may change as the economic recession continues to impact especially on young people, and the scope for skills goals may be sharpened with the launch of the EFA Global Monitoring Report on Skills in October 2012 (UNESCO, 2012b) and the UNESCO World TVET report in November 2012 (UNESCO, 2012d).

Arguably, one reason why the EFA GMR on skills has been constantly postponed is that there has not been a skills lobby as there was an ECD or Adult Literacy ‘lobby’. If there is a

coming together of any skills advocacy they should perhaps focus both on the need to rethink the poor framing of the 'life-skills' EFA Dakar Goal, as well as the case for Skills-youth-employment-and-economic-growth for the more general post-MDG agenda.

### **3.5. Southern Involvement in What Appears Like a Northern Debate?**

Several of the reports we have analysed briefly above have noted that there has thus far been little involvement by developing and emerging countries in these post-2015 debates. Typically, much of the activity around post-2015 in such countries has been as a result of an external initiative.

For instance, the UNDG has taken on responsibility to encourage 'inclusive national consultations', from May 2012 till January 2013, to 'stimulate the debate on the post-2015 development agenda'. UNDG's initial step is to stimulate such debates in some 50 countries (19 of these in Africa).<sup>77</sup> UNDG has a worthy goal here of seeking to build a strategic coalition of partners to shape the post-2015 debates. Doubtless this is a deliberate attempt to broaden the base of consultation as compared to the process for establishing the MDGs in 2000-2001. We can note that other international NGOs such as the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) are carrying out similar consultative processes in the developing world. Thus the GCE is consulting its members in no less than 96 countries seeking to establish 'Education post-2015: Your views on what should come next'. There are 19 questions to be covered which ask for partner views on 'What we want in Education'; on the EFA and MDG frameworks; and on civil society engagement with EFA goals, including on the impact of the Global Partnership for Education.

What then do we know about stakeholders themselves in the developing and emerging economies?

#### *Asian Perspectives*

In June 2012, the UNDP Seoul Policy Centre, the Korea Development Institute (KDI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) and the Graduate School of International Studies at Korea University organized an experts workshop on 'Asian Perspectives on the post-2015 development agenda' (KDI-MOFAT-UNDP, 2012). The workshop was attended by experts from China, India, Japan, Indonesia, Cambodia, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea.<sup>78</sup> The report of this meeting is not yet available (as of the end of August 2012).

The concept note does not give much away regarding any specific Asian position on education and skills, except to comment on its critical importance:

investment in the human capital was critical in the development of... "Asian tigers" and one of the key common features of the Asian developmental states. Human capital provides enabling conditions for the implementation of the goals. As such, its

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<sup>77</sup> See for details of process and countries: <http://www.beyond2015.org/news/un-releases-details-its-process-create-post-2015-development-framework>

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[http://www.undp.org/content/seoul\\_policy\\_center/en/home/presscenter/articles/2012/06/11/asi-an-countries-to-debate-development-after-2015/](http://www.undp.org/content/seoul_policy_center/en/home/presscenter/articles/2012/06/11/asi-an-countries-to-debate-development-after-2015/)

role should be considered in the formulation of a new set of development goals. (KDI-MOFAT-UNDP, 2012: 3)

But what are others saying from Asia?

One view for South East Asia from a seasoned observer in the region is: 'I don't get much sense of urgency - although this could change as the national (UNDG) consultations take place. There remains perhaps more interest in successful reports of up to 2015 rather than the unfinished or new business after 2015. A lot of MOEs think that since they are near UPE, that is good enough, and are not thinking of the other targets -- or of new ones' (Communication to King, 23.08.12). This is confirmed by another international observer based in the region: 'However, amongst ministries/governments here, there are very few interested in driving EFA post-2015 in some incarnation or other' (Communication to King, 23.8.12).

India is one of the 10 Asia and Pacific countries where UNDG will be carrying out 'national consultations'. But in some quarters at least the post-2015 debate is perceived as a Northern donor preoccupation: 'I have participated in a IDRC-engineered discussion in Delhi where a few eminent non-government intellectuals participated. But post-2015 discussion is a donor fixation. No one here cares much about it' (Senior national policy maker to King, 01.07.12.). Another voice from a leading business development organization has commented that 'there is not much debate about the MDGs in the public domain. After the 1991 restructuring of the economy, the focus has been more on economic growth than social development' (Communication to King, 23.08.12).

Bangladesh is very little different. One commentator with an understanding of the international in relation to the local has commented: 'MDGs, 2015 EFA goals, and post-2015 are an international discourse dominated by the international agencies and some interested bilaterals. Post-MDG discussions have been an agency-driven process. There may appear to be more of a "rhetorical" interest in the debate, but that is because Bangladesh relies more on external assistance than India' (Communication to King, 23.8.12).

### *African Perspectives*

In a very similar vein from South Africa, a leading policy maker in government, now in academia, has commented as follows: 'I have never heard of a post-2015 education agenda, and, most probably, many people have not heard about it. Of course we would like to know what the Northerners are planning for us now' (Senior policy person, now academic, to King, 22.08.12). The situation seems not very different in Kenya, where a senior researcher in an international NGO based there has commented that 'this (post-2015 debate) does not appear to be much of an issue among Kenyan education organisations, whether government or non-government' (communication to King, 22.08.12).

In Francophone West Africa, Burkina Faso presents the interesting case of a country that has postponed the reaching of both the MDGs and the EFA Goals till 2021, as laid out in its 10 year education plan (Carton to King, 27.08.12)

At the continental level in Africa, the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) is focusing on the unfinished business of EFA rather than promoting a debate around new goals and targets: 'Based on the current trends of EFA and MDGs in Africa,

ANCEFA then called upon African Union member States, Regional bodies and stakeholders, and especially national policy makers to keep the EFA momentum high, Africa does not need a new agenda beyond 2015' (Sow, ANCEFA policy brief, 2012). There are certainly other conversations and discussions in Africa (Trudell, 2012).

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has, since 2011, been engaging in consultations with African States and experts on what an African consensus on the post-2015 framework might look like. In July 2012, UNECA, the African Union, the African Development Bank and the UNDP came out with a report, **Assessing Progress in Africa towards the Millennium Development Goals 2012 (UNECA, 2012)**, which was endorsed by the 19th Summit African Union Heads of State and Government. Of relevance to this paper is that the subtitle of this report was: *Emerging Perspectives from Africa on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*.

The bulk of the report is concerned with progress towards the MDGs in Africa; but a section following this specifically looks at the post-2015 agenda. The report does not question the need to have a set of post-2015 goals; rather, it tries to make some progress in determining what they might look like<sup>79</sup> and what should be the priorities.

To help to determine Africa's position on the post-2015 agenda, UNECA commissioned papers, consulted member States' to get their perspectives on the issue, and co-convened (with the African Union Commission and UNDP-Regional Bureau for Africa) a regional workshop in November 2011 in Accra on the post-2015 agenda.<sup>80</sup> In addition, UNECA and AUC administered an electronic survey which was completed by CSOs, NGOs, research institutions and ministries of planning, finance and economic development. So what did they conclude?

The consensus from their consultation was that the preferred option for the post-2015 framework is the 'MDG-plus' approach.<sup>81</sup>

With regard to education, the respondents to the electronic survey were very clear that the MDG focus exclusively on primary education was insufficient and they 'called for greater emphasis on post-primary education. This is reminiscent of what Burnett (2012) found in his survey of 21 ministers of education. The UNECA respondents also argued for greater focus on education outcomes and not only on enrolments' (p.132).

Participants from the regional workshop on the post-2015 development agenda recommended that the post-2015 agenda should focus on economic transformation, human development and education and technology.

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<sup>79</sup> The three options considered by UNECA as part of their consultations were: i) keep the same MDGs, but extend the 2015 deadline; ii) retain the main elements of the MDGs, but add new goals and targets to account for new challenges etc – referred to as the 'MDG-plus' option; iii) develop an entirely revised framework.

<sup>80</sup> This was attended by 47 representatives from 18 African countries representing government, civil society and academia. See also the outcome doc from Nov 2011 workshop: <http://www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/OutcomeDoc%20English.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> This approach refers to carrying forward the key elements of the current MDGs, but reformulating them to take account of the new development challenges that have emerged since 2000.

The report outlines the kind of enabling environment that it sees as ‘the basic preconditions for success in carrying out the post-2015 agenda’ (p.135), including issues like peace and security, good governance, human rights, justice and equality, and enhanced capacity to measure progress and ensure accountability. It then goes on to specify three priority post-2015 goals: i) Promote transformation and sustainable growth (e.g. covering jobs, rural development, food security, trade); ii) Promote education and technological innovation; iii) Promote human development (covering gender, human rights, social protection, health, the environment). The specific proposals to ‘promote education and technological innovation’ post-2015 included:

- Strengthen quality and access to basic and tertiary education
- Invest in secondary, tertiary and vocational education
- Promote technology transfer
- Invest in research and development (p.136)

### *China, Brazil and Chile*

We have mentioned South Africa already, but what is the situation in the other BRICS countries, including China and Brazil? In China, it is interesting to note that it was an initiative by UNDP Beijing in May 2012 that brought the first discussion on post-2015 with Chinese think tanks into being. In a parallel to the emphasis in Japan mentioned above, the focus of this first discussion was not around health and education, but rather on infrastructure; nor was it about aid, but more about technology transfer (Melamed, 2012). It appears that China had not been involved in post-2015 debates until this point. This initial event arguably helped China to decide to take a more open approach to engaging in this global debate; this duly opened the door for the national consultation process, organised by UNDG, to be agreed in principle, as well as for the Chinese to nominate a member of the Secretary General’s high-level panel.

Brazil, again, is one of the countries picked out for the series of national consultations initiated by UNDG. But post-2015 has not been much discussed so far. Indeed, here are the words of one very experienced observer of international developments and national policies: ‘Millennium Goals Agenda Post-2015? What is that? For the right and the wrong reasons, Brazil remains a country isolated from the ruminations of UNESCO’ (Communication to King, 23.08.12).

Even in neighbouring Chile, the key debate at the moment in education is national and very intense like Brazil, and not related at all to the role of education in the post-2015 world. One very experienced observer has remarked that debates on post-2015 are being organised outside a national framework: ‘The UNESCO Regional Office is leading the organisation of discussions and activities related to EFA and post-2015 for the whole Region’ (Communication to King, 15.08.12). Another is doubtful about the process: ‘I am not too optimistic about the quality of the discussion or the outcome or goals identified in such a discussion’ (Communication to King, 12.08.12).

### 3.6. Other Agendas

Having reviewed a range of papers and reports bearing more or less directly on post-2015, we need to conclude with an attempt to put this into some perspective.<sup>82</sup> We can, even in this partial review of the evidence, see that this process of global goal-setting has uncovered a wide range of very different responses. Some initiatives are still at the consultative stage; some reactions have focused on the necessary preconditions or basic principles; and some have gone further and proposed particular priorities for goals.

With the UN involved at a relatively high level with some heads of state, a high level panel on post-2015 (HLP), and several consultative processes, there is a good deal of organizational energy going to be invested. It will possibly become important, at least within the aid community, to be clear about what does get included within any new development agenda. What would be the consequences of a sector such as Education not being a key component of any new aid architecture, or not being as significant as over the present fifteen year period? One major development agency has already said that support to educational aid within the agency would certainly suffer should this happen (Communication to King, 27.08.12). We shall note below how central to development aid is the agreement on goals.

Already there is considerable debate in international NGOs, think tanks, foundations, and in development agencies and in development studies institutes about this process, and yet there has not yet been any meeting of the Secretary General's HLP, nor any release of its preliminary position. The debate can only intensify as the results of the consultative processes we have alluded to (in the GCE, EC and UNDG) get turned into formal reports and positions on the post-2015 agenda, and HLP releases its first report in early 2013.

#### *International vs. National Agendas*

But even as this 'international' discourse around the next agenda becomes more active and more wide-ranging, we should remember that one of the more balanced assessments of the first ten years of the present MDGs judged that they had had more impact on the aid agency discourse than on the developing world (Manning, 2009). Countries continue necessarily to have their own national plans and sectorial education plans. These are *the* development agendas from India to South Africa, and from China to Brazil. The notion that there can be a set of development priorities established for the world needs to be very critically assessed, as it has been by Jansen:

There is, as always, a disjuncture between targets and target dates set by international agencies (2015, which I know nothing about) and those set by national actors (2030, the latest National Development Plan of South Africa). This is a problem I have written about often: the assumption that you can remote-control from the centre of the world system a desired set of developmental goals for the periphery. It is not only arrogant; it is simply a waste of time and resources. (Jansen to King, 28.08.12)

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<sup>82</sup> NORRAG has begun building up a small data base of articles, reports, papers and blogs on post-2015. So far, it has logged in 72 items which are concerned with post-2015 in general, and 37 which are specifically concerned with education and skills development.

### *Everything for All (EFA) vs. Finite Resources?*

A very different take from this critique of global agenda setting by ‘international’ actors is the view of the MDG or EFA process as un-do-able because it operates with the view that some things like basic education and health cannot be rationed, or that there should be nobody left in absolute poverty.<sup>83</sup> The increasingly inclusive and comprehensive tone of the possible new MDGs or EFA goals, such as the World Economic Forum (WEF’s) ‘Getting to Zero’ approach, discussed above, suggests that no one and especially no child should be left behind. Instead of the current goals, some of which talk of halving, reducing by two-thirds, or a significant reduction, this approach would aim to achieve universal coverage.

But in a situation where national resources are finite and need to be allocated across the entire education, health or other sectors, the MDG or EFA priority focus on particular sub-sectors can lead to severe distortions. It can also lead in poorer countries to a greater aid dependency. Thus, we have already noted that the Dakar World Forum of 2000 gave the pledge that no country in need, with a credible plan for EFA, and especially those in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, ‘should be denied international assistance’ (UNESCO, 2000: 9). In support of achieving universal coverage of basic education, ‘UNESCO estimates that there is an external financing gap of \$16 billion a year to support basic education needs in low-income countries, over and above what developing country governments and donors currently resource’ (Brookings, 2011: 2). In other words, achieving education for all (or health for all) depends in these countries on aid. In this way, the aid community is inseparably connected with the setting of goals, or in support of activities such as the Secretary General’s Global Initiative on Education and ‘Education First’. We just noted how critical to the position of aid to education in development agencies might be the decision on how education and skills are included in any next development agenda.

### *Elaborating the Right to Education?*

The Education for All movement, and the education dimension of the present or any future MDGs, are reinforcements of the right to education, established in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The notion that ‘Education shall be free, at least in its elementary and fundamental stages’ and that ‘Elementary education shall be compulsory’ (UN, 1948. Article 26) is widely breached in national practice. So is the additional right, often forgotten, that ‘Technical and professional education shall be made generally available’ (ibid). However, countries which may have paid little attention to the Jomtien Declaration on the grounds that they have a developed educational system can be challenged by a ‘more ambitious, complex and multidimensional interpretation of the right to education’ (Bellei to King, 27.08.12). There is no mention of quality in Article 26, nor of learning. And though it is stated that education should be free, it is also stated that ‘parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children’ (ibid).

A country like Chile which may have paid little attention to the Jomtien or Dakar goals may be challenged by an international framework on the right to education which makes quality

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<sup>83</sup> I am indebted to Alexa Draxler for the rationing metaphor: ‘The problem is that the UN is in the business of claiming that the sky is the limit, and that health and education cannot be rationed. So instead of rationing things rationally, we ration them over time. Send everyone to school and worry about the fact that kids aren’t actually learning anything later’ (Draxler to King, 28.08.12).

and equity more explicit in any future MDG or EFA goals. Such an approach could address many developed economies, including Chile, as instanced below:

Of course, an international framework about the right to education is not expected to tackle specific educational policy decisions, but some of the consequences of those decisions are directly linked to both quality and equity in education: Is it possible to have a “good” but segregated school system? Is it possible to have a price discrimination mechanism within the compulsory and publicly funded educational system? Is it satisfactory to have market dynamics (including for-profit organizations as educational providers) as the main regulatory framework for K-12 education? (Bellei to King, 27.08.12)

#### *International Comparisons vs. Local Assessments*

Some of the proposals for education post-2015 require rigorous assessments of what in fact is being learnt in school systems and in the world of work for SD, especially in the developing world. Indeed, what the *Compact on Learning* has termed the ‘global learning crisis’ is the failure to learn adequately in so many developing country school systems. Hence the current development of *Proposed Competencies for Learning Outcomes: Early Childhood, Primary and Post-primary* to which we have referred earlier. Even if the results of the widespread consultative process on competencies is not yet complete, there is a concern in several quarters about high stakes international assessments versus the ordinary national, regional or local assessments of learning. Barrett was already referred to on the importance of qualitative ‘process goals’ rather than quantitative indicators of learning. And Robert Myers has summed up his own view of the need for intimate local feed-back in a single long sentence:

My own (unpopular) posture with respect to evaluation for the early childhood realm is that we should stop thinking that we can be “universal”, applying the same criteria and instruments to all children everywhere regardless of context, that the “locally” (probably national but even better if in even smaller units linked to particular contexts) negotiated and developed forms of evaluation should reflect local culture and desired outcomes rather than (or probably in addition to) internationally desired outcomes (such as reading and math skills), that at this level we should certainly take the emphasis off international comparison, and that the main use of assessment (evaluation) should be to feed back results to teachers and parents in a system that provides accompaniment for these to identify what they do well and what they do not, assisting them to determine and carry out activities that help improve teaching and learning. (Myers to King, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2012).

#### *A NORRAG Perspective on Post-2015*

In the organizing memorandum for the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012 workshop, NORRAG suggested that there were several lenses where a diversity of critical approaches could be valuable for the analysis of post-2015. One of these was a concern with what could be learned from the last twenty and more years of goal setting in education in reviewing the options for beyond 2015. Interestingly, the UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Educational Development for 2013 also proposes to look backwards, but equally consider the present, and review the future in its next biennial conference on *Education and Development Post*

2015: *Reflecting, Reviewing, Re-visioning*.<sup>84</sup> It was essential that such analysis of education not be separated from the wider economic and social development frameworks; hence the title of *Education AND Development*.

A second lens was to review how the process of global goal setting was actually involving perspectives from the South. In this respect we have noted several processes of consultation with the South which appear to be orchestrated or supported from the North. There have been a series of individual comments also from leading figures in the South which suggest a very different level of engagement with the next global development agenda than is common with many northern development practitioners. It will be valuable however to follow the process of both the UN-led country and the thematic consultations in the South. Here, it will be important not to focus only on aid-dependent countries, but to examine the procedures in China and in India, for instance. In addition, NORRAG will carry out a series of country case studies in at least three countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso in order to tease out how the so-called international agenda interacts with the national planning processes, and particularly the national education and skills planning strategies. All three of these countries are also involved in the UN-led country consultations, and are to different degrees dependent on aid, including to education. It may be useful also to carry out a light case study on a country such as South Africa which is not aid-dependent.

A third lens anticipated by NORRAG was to focus both on Education and on Skills Development in reviewing the post-2015 literature. As noted above, somewhat surprisingly in view of the crisis of economic growth and growing youth unemployment in many countries, there has not been a marked focus on skills development as a corollary of education in the post-2015 discussions.

From these reports, it can scarcely be argued that there is a strong and coherent lobby for skills development as a critical component in any post-2015 agenda. Possibly this might alter with the publication of the EFA GMR on skills development, and the World TVET Report later in the year. However, it seems essential for any skills goal to be very closely linked to the key factors that have emerged in education, such as the focus on learning, quality, equity and measurement.

In conclusion, it cannot be said that there is yet a clear front-runner for any new global Education MDG or revised EFA goals, widely supported by the international education community. The nearest we come to that is in the *Compact on Learning* since that is supported by multiple partners. But with the exception of DFID and the Aga Khan Development Network, the supporting organisations are mostly based in the United States.

There are many laps in the MDG and EFA marathon still to run. Reporting from the several consultative processes has yet to happen, and from the Secretary General's High Level Panel. This review can only be a snap-shot of the state of play at the relatively early stage. Indeed, the paper will be continually updated and altered over the next year and more. NORRAG also expects to be able to dedicate at least one whole section of an issue of NORRAG News to this emerging post-2015 world late in the year, and a complete issue in 2013.

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<sup>84</sup> The conference will be held on 10-12 September 2013 in New College Oxford. See: <http://www.cfbt.com/ukfiet/>

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## Annex 1. Priority Education Levels and Issues Identified in Post-2015 and Related Documents

Actor	Comment	Priority Education Levels									Priority Education Issues							
		ECE	1°	Post-1°	L2°	U2°	3°	Skills	LLL	AL	EFA	Access	Qual	Learning	Teachers	Equity	C&V	ESD
<b>Post-2015 related think-pieces, papers, reports</b>																		
<i>Multi-laterals / multi-stakeholder organisations</i>																		
GSP (2012)	Report of UN High-level Panel on Global Sustainability																	
Shaeffer (2011) (UNESCO)	Summary of Progress Towards Education For All																	
UNESCO (2012a)	UNESCO Think Piece for the UN post-2015 Task Team																	
UNESCO Bangkok (2012)	Towards EFA 2015 and Beyond – Shaping a New Vision of Education																	
UNICEF (2012)*	Towards a Post-2015 World Fit for Children																	
WEF-GAC (2012)	Getting to Zero		(i)									(i)			(i)			
<i>Civil society and think-tanks</i>																		
Adams (2012)	Paper on learning and post-2015 framework																	
Brookings (2011)	A Global Compact on Learning		(ii)															
CIGI (2011; 2012)	Post-2015 Goals, Targets and Indicators / Toward A Post-2015 Development Paradigm																	
Results for Development (Burnett and Felsman, 2012)	Post-2015 Education MDGs		(i)															
Save the Children (2012a)	After the Millennium Development Goals																	

**Legend:** ECE - Early childhood care and education; 1<sup>0</sup> - primary education; Post-1<sup>0</sup> - post primary education in general; L2<sup>0</sup> - lower secondary education; U2<sup>0</sup> - upper secondary education; 3<sup>0</sup> - higher education (e.g. university/ polytechnic); TVET - Technical and vocational education and training; LLL - Lifelong learning; AL - Adult learning and literacy; EFA - EFA as an unfinished agenda; Qual - Quality; C&V - Culture and values  
Notes: \* also draws on [http://www.unicef.org/rosa/media\\_7857.htm](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/media_7857.htm); (i) implied priorities, though not directly mentioned; (ii) priority is lower primary levels

(continued from previous page)

Actor	Comment	ECE	1°	Post-1°	L2°	U2°	3°	Skills	LLL	AL	EFA	Access	Qual	Learning	Teachers	Equity	C&V	ESD
<b>Post-2015 consultations</b>																		
European Commission	Public consultation about overall post-2015 framework, June-Sept 2012.							No results yet										
Global Campaign for Education	Consultation of GCE members in 50 countries (same as UNDP countries) on post-2015 education, July-Aug 2012							No results yet										
UN Development Group (UNDG)	Public consultation about overall post-2015 framework, June 2012 - Jan 2013.																	
	UNDG first thematic consultation on growth, structural change and employment (UNDP-ILO, 2012)																	
<b>Agreed declarations and normative frameworks</b>																		
UN (2012d)	Rio+20 outcomes document																	
<b>Existing official positions (but not explicitly post-2015)</b>																		
DFID (2010) (**)	Education Strategy 2010–2015																	
Global Partnership for Education (GPE, 2012a; GPE, 2012b)	Strategic Plan and 'Final Decisions' document from June 2012 Board meeting																	
Hewlett Foundation	website																	
Save the Children (2012b)	Education Strategy 2012-2015																	
USAID (2011)	Education Strategy 2011-2015																	
World Bank (2011)	Education Strategy 2020																	

Note: \*\* this indicative, but is not the official DFID education strategy as it was sidelined after the change in UK government in 2010.

## **Annex 2. The Education For All Goals**

Six internationally agreed education goals aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

### **Goal 1**

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

### **Goal 2**

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

### **Goal 3**

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes

### **Goal 4**

Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

### **Goal 5**

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

### **Goal 6**

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

### Annex 3. The Millennium Development Goals

<b>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>
Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
<b>Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education</b>
Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
<b>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</b>
Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
<b>Goal 4: Reduce child mortality</b>
Target 4.A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
<b>Goal 5: Improve maternal health</b>
Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health
<b>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>
Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
<b>Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability</b>
Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss
Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
<b>Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development</b>
Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries
Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second
Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term
Target 8.E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

