Preliminary Recommendations to the Education for All Futures Group

United States Agency for International Development
April 19, 2000

Introduction

In light of the results of the Evaluation of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All, USAID strongly recommends that planning for Post-Dakar EFA mandates, structures, functions and roles be guided by a set of the following basic principles to achieve EFA Goals:

1. The future EFA system should build upon, and never negate, achievements made to date by nations, regional organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, and the private sector including foundations, non-governmental organizations and professional associations.
2. An ethos of inter-agency unity and collaboration, not competition, will be required to achieve EFA Goals.
3. The resulting system should enable the expansion and strengthening of existing institutional mandates, roles and activities, as needed, at all levels, but especially at local and national levels; the creation of new mechanisms should be avoided to the extent possible.
4. The system should be simple and streamlined, avoiding complexity in every way possible in order to enhance inter-agency communication and action.
5. The system should flow from a thoroughgoing analysis of functional responsibilities and avowed leadership capabilities.
6. The system should be crafted explicitly to avoid unnecessary duplication.
7. The vast preponderance of international investment in EFA should be focused first on nations, secondly on regional networks and relatively less on global structures (since they are already in place and should fulfill their existing mandates).
8. Non-governmental organizations should be included as full partners.
9. The positive contributions of all partners should be routinely recognized in relation not to the size of their investment but rather to the results they help nations achieve.

National Functional Responsibilities

USAID agrees strongly that the national level should be the top priority for Post-Dakar EFA activities, not only in terms of financial investment but also of technical cooperation and assistance. We plan to continue to focus the vast majority of our investments and technical support for basic education at the national level. Indeed, we believe the international community should help nations conduct participatory processes at all levels for the development of policies, plans and innovative activities to expand and improve basic education.

USAID recommends forging inter-agency alliances for assisting nations to develop **EFA Action Plans** within Comprehensive Development Frameworks (CDF) and, as appropriate, Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS). These efforts should be an integral part of on-going policy planning in nations in education and related sectors. The possible constitution of separate and artificial EFA planning entities should be avoided. Exceptions would include only those countries where formal and non-formal education planning systems are essentially non-functional (e.g. in some nations emerging from crisis). However, new fora for dialogue could be most beneficial in nations lacking sufficient avenues for open discussion with civil society and

communities. For this, countries should be encouraged to create national EFA Forums that use existing resources and require little or no additional funding. ?

Special attention should be given in National EFA Action Plans to targeting those populations thus far under-served, including girls, subordinate linguistic and ethnic groups, rural and urban poor, children with disabilities, children in abusive child labor or other forms of servitude, child soldiers and ex-combatants. Nations should be urged to promote community-level involvement in educational objectives setting and accountability. Planning approaches that are exclusively centrally managed should be discouraged. A positive emphasis upon planning approaches that promote the derivation of educational contents and active teaching and learning methods from local cultural and linguistic contexts should be encouraged.

At the national level, the functional responsibilities could include:

- Preparing participatory National EFA Action Plans
- Carrying out, evaluating and revising the Plans on an annual basis
- Leading donor coordination processes at the national level
- Ensuring statistics gathering, research, evaluation, monitoring and reporting
- Conducting studies on best practices, lessons learned and effective tools for achieving education for all
- Collaborating closely with the primary regional network

Regional Functional Responsibilities

The next level of priority for Post-Dakar follow-up should be placed at the regional level. In each region, the EFA Forum should select one **Lead EFA Network** from those that offer to play this role. This network should have an outstanding record of achievement in building significant activities leading to expanded and improved basic education. It should have the strong support of most nations in the regions, including both governmental and non-governmental entities. The Lead EFA Network need not restrict its work only to basic education, but it should be willing to expand and enhance its leadership in the EFA field in the region.

USAID believes that beginning new regional networks or depositing responsibilities in individuals would not accomplish the depth or quality of work urgently required. We recognize that additional resources may well be needed by some of the regional networks to help nations achieve significant gains. The international community should stand ready to help meet these needs in order to ensure the leadership and effectiveness of these regional networks. Primary funding assistance from donors should be directed, however, mainly to the national level wherever possible.

The Lead EFA Networks, in turn, should create partnerships with other networks and the regional offices of multilateral and bilateral donors in each region that share common goals for achieving EFA. These partnerships should help minimize competition and build solidarity for attaining a common vision.

The functional responsibilities of the Lead EFA Networks would include:

- Providing guidance and support for the formation of effective National EFA Action Plans
- Achieving a constant dialogue between nations in the region as they formulate, carry out, evaluate and adjust their National EFA Action Plans

- Building strong partnerships and common activities with other networks in the region devoted to EFA
- Holding regional meetings and training seminars on topics of key importance to attaining quality learning for all in each region
- Helping nations describe and share their best practices, lessons learned and tools
- Disseminating those results and reporting them to the international level
- Collaborating with media organizations to promote educational advocacy in the region

International Functional Responsibilities

UNESCO Leadership

Due to its international mandate for educational development, USAID strongly recommends that UNESCO lead the Post-Dakar EFA effort. Director General Matsuura has offered UNESCO to undertake this leadership role. In light of this offer, we recommend that UNESCO consider blending the current EFA Secretariat with the main UNESCO program to gain greater "value-added" for the EFA movement. We encourage UNESCO to give careful consideration to ending the separation between the EFA Secretariat and the UNESCO Basic Education Program, thereby avoiding any unnecessary duplication of effort and streamlining leadership processes. This would require the broadening the organization's program in basic education and the focusing of UNESCO resources to support participatory policy planning at national and regional levels.

In this regard, the role of UNESCO's Institute of Statistics (UIS) will be of key importance. The UIS should build upon national level EFA assessments and the technical support of stronger RTAGs that wish to continue to function in certain regions. The UIS should also continue to collaborate closely with OECD/DAC advancements and bilateral and multilateral donors that provide support for activities to improve and expand national and regional capacities for gathering educational statistics, conducting assessments, monitoring activities and evaluating learning outcomes.

The UNESCO/UIS leadership would include the following functional responsibilities:

- Providing technical assistance for policy planning and program development to nations and Lead EFA Regional Networks
- Uniting with UNDP, UNICEF and other bilateral and multilateral donors to offer focused program field support, especially for nations and areas of nations most in need of technical and financial support
- Encouraging other donors to take leadership for specific topics within EFA, using their own budgetary support to coordinate and fund these interagency activities
- Monitoring and reporting on progress toward achieving EFA goals
- Providing streamlined Secretariat support for the revitalized EFA Forum
- Enhancing the current EFA website to make it more of a service tool that is pro-active and interactive.
- Providing or encouraging the preparation of a wide variety of publications by nations, regional networks, and members of the EFA Forum, as well as by UNESCO

The EFA Forum

In order to build on existing strengths and not undercut gains achieved, we recommend that the EFA Forum be revitalized and continue holding meetings each six months. However, we believe that the system of leadership by the five "convening" UN agencies should be ended. Instead, a new, balanced and representative technical leadership should be drawn from major multilateral and bilateral donors with a track record of investment in EFA, the Lead EFA Networks, international NGOs that engage in direct field activities, and most importantly, a rotating panel of outstanding national EFA planners. In order to forge collaborative action plans and programs, the EFA Forum should divide its meetings into a) gatherings of the whole for the discussion of common agendas, and b) groups by type of representation. Sub-group networks and meetings convened electronically should be encouraged.

The EFA Forum should give special attention to encouraging its members to help nations forge effective National EFA Action Plans in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and in nations with complex emergencies, HIV/AIDs pandemics and natural disasters.

The revitalized EFA Forum could have the following functional responsibilities:

- Conducting advocacy in close collaboration with the international media
- Ensuring the provision of technical guidance for nations and regional networks for the development, implementation and evaluation of National EFA Action Plans
- Representing EFA in major international conferences and planning groups
- Providing guidance to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics
- Helping UNESCO to build interagency partnerships for on key topics for achieving EFA
- Providing recommendations to UNESCO for compiling and disseminating best practices, lessons learned and promoting public and private dialogues for EFA
- Reporting to and recommending agenda items and preparing papers for meetings of the EFA Council or Trust (see below)
- Planning and holding major EFA Fora each five years until 2015

Non-Governmental Organizations

It is clear that major field-oriented international NGOs that work closely with national governments and NGOs can and should play major roles in future EFA activities. To create this mandate, they should be invited to reinforce existing ties and networks, sending key representatives to EFA Forum meetings, and conducting leadership activities for civil societies around the world.

NGO functional responsibilities could include:

- Providing technical leadership and support for national EFA Action Plans
- Developing innovative models and tools
- "Reaching the unreached" who cannot easily be served by multilateral and bilateral donors
- Conducting research, evaluations and disseminating results
- Promoting advocacy with governments, civil society and the media

High Level EFA Council or Trust

A high-level EFA Council or Trust should be created with membership from the directors of major international development agencies, including both bilateral and multilateral donors and private foundations, selected heads of state and ministers of education and finance, and leaders of major international NGOs. However, many of these directors and leaders currently participate in a plethora of meetings ranging from UN conferences and inter-governmental meetings to conferences on sectoral topics. Given their busy schedules, we recommend that the proposed EFA Council or Trust be convened no more frequently than each two years.

The functional responsibilities of the high-level EFA Council or Trust would include:

- Leading international advocacy for EFA
- Reviewing reports on results, problems and needs and recommending new pathways for action
- Providing guidance to UNESCO and the EFA Forum
- Promoting increased technical cooperation and investment in EFA programs
- Forging methods for improved donor coordination at international and regional levels, especially in relation to initiatives of the G-8, G-7, UN, OECD/DAC, multilateral development banks and other existing groups.

The International Consultative Forum on Education for All

1990-2000

An Evaluation

A Report to the Forum's Steering Committee

By

Angela Little and Errol Miller

March 2000

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AALAE	African Association for Literacy and Adult Education
AAU	Association of Arab Universities
ACCU	Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADB	African Development Bank
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CARICOM	Caribbean Community Secretariat
CCA	Common country assessment
CDF	Comprehensive development framework
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CONFEMEN	Conférence des Ministres de l'Education des Pays ayant le Français en Partage
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EDC	Export Development Corporation
ELL	Essential levels of learning
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
GTAG	Global Technical Advisory Group
ICEA	International Community Education Association
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EFA	Education for All
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEMNET	African Women Development and Communication Network
IAC	Inter-Agency Commission for the World Conference on Education for All
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
MLA	Minimum levels of learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RTAG	Regional Technical Advisory Group
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation
SEAMES	South East Asian Ministers of Education Secretariat
Sida	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
UIE	UNESCO Institute for Education
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Forum
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNU	United Nations University
USAID	The US Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

SECTION 1

THE STUDY

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (EFA), referred to hereafter as the Forum. The Forum was set up by the Convenors of the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) in 1991, with a mandate to 'serve national follow-up action and support it effectively' and 'seek to maintain the spirit of co-operation amongst countries, multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as NGOs, which has been the hallmark of the World Conference'. Ten years after the WCEFA, and in preparation for the World Education Forum, Dakar, April 2000, the Forum Steering Committee commissioned an evaluation of this structure, in order to guide decision-making concerning a possible revised mandate.

1.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The overall objective of the study is to examine critically the purpose, role and functions of the Forum as originally perceived and its achievements in promoting and monitoring progress towards EFA goals. In the conduct of the evaluation, answers to the following were to be sought:

a) What were the original intentions in setting up the Forum? What was the background, before and during the Jomtien conference, including the debate between the main partners at the time?

b) How closely has the EFA agenda been linked up with other facets of the UN development agenda?

c) How has EFA been conceived by the EFA Forum partners, and especially by the Convenors, during the period since 1990?

d) Has the Forum constituted an appropriate platform for the tasks entrusted in it?

e) How have the sponsors assumed their respective responsibilities?

f) To what extent has the Forum contributed to enhancing the spirit of partnership at international, regional and national levels? What have been the criteria for membership? What main actors have not participated and why? What has been learned from the Mid-term review? To what extent have these lessons been applied in practice? What has been the role of bilateral and civil society organizations?

g) What has been the role of the Steering Committee and to what extent has it really provided guidance and resources to the Secretariat in discharging its duties?

h) What have been the main problems and limitations of the Secretariat?

i) What activities have been conducted by the Forum and what are the effects? Are there better ways of carrying out these activities?

j) What options are there for international co-ordination structures in future?

1.3 EVALUATORS

The Steering Committee appointed two persons to carry out the study. The criteria specified by the Steering Committee for selecting the evaluators were that both should be education specialists with international recognition, long experience and excellent analytical skills.

One evaluator should be a member of the EFA Forum. He/she should have participated in the movement since the Jomtien conference and possess an insider's knowledge of the processes leading up to Jomtien and of the follow-up work during the decade. The other evaluator should not be a member of Forum. He/she should have an extensive knowledge of the issues at stake prior to the Jomtien Conference and of the major educational developments at international, regional and national levels during the decade.

Using these criteria the Steering Committee appointed Professor Angela Little of the Institute of Education of London University, as the 'outsider', and Professor Errol Miller of the Institute of Education, University of the West Indies as the 'insider'.

1.4 METHOD

The four main sources of evidence used by the evaluators were:

1. Documents on the formation of the Consultative Forum, its establishment and its operations since 1991.

2. Interviews (face to face, telephone, e-mail, letter, fax) with persons familiar with the formation and subsequent activity of the Forum. These included interviews with members of the convening agencies, participants in the Forum meetings (Paris, Delhi, Amman), present and past members and observers of the Forum Steering Committee, ministers, EFA Assessment Coordinators, persons with responsibility for EFA in agencies and some countries, and present and past members of the Forum Secretariat. Discussion with a national group, comprising present and past ministry officials, agency staff and others involved in EFA work since Jomtien.

3. Questionnaire survey of persons attending the three meetings of the Consultative Forum.

4. Observation of EFA activities including meetings of the Steering Committee, Management Committee, regional workshops and regional consultations.

The 'outsider' interviewed present members and observers of the Steering Committee while the 'insider' interviewed former members. The insider interviewed persons with responsibility for EFA in agencies located in North America; the outsider interviewed persons with responsibility for EFA in agencies located in Europe. Both attended regional consultations, interviewed

members of the Secretariat (separately) and examined documents. Through the respective Ministry of Education, and with the assistance of UNICEF, the 'outsider' convened a meeting of nationals and agency staff who had been involved in EFA work in one country

The 'insider' and 'outsider' worked independently until the point of synthesis of evidence and report writing. Synthesis and report writing was achieved via email communication. Consistent with the design of having one 'outsider' and one 'insider', we did not exchange data or opinions until each had drafted her/his tentative inferences and conclusions. Agreement at the outset to arrive at a common conclusion provided the framework within which differences of interpretation were resolved.

The study has a number of limitations:

- The Forum is but one of five inter-linked sets of follow-up action envisaged at Jomtien. The other four were (i) needs assessment at the 'country' level and identification of resource requirements, (ii) effective co-ordination by agencies (multilateral, bilateral and NGOs) at country-level, (iii) regional and sub-regional consultations to share mutual concerns and knowledge of how multilateral, bilateral and NGOs can best assist countries, (iv) increased support to basic education by the WCEFA sponsors, and annual meetings to co-ordinate activities in the field. A comprehensive evaluation of the Forum's effectiveness, should, in principle, embrace evaluations of these four. Clearly this broader evaluation falls well beyond the scope of the present study.

- The evaluation was conducted within a restricted time frame and budget, amounting to two person-months between October 1999 and February 2000. This restricted the assessment of the Forum's work across different countries.

- Some items of the terms of reference lacked clarity. The evaluators acknowledge that they should have spent more time analysing the terms of reference with the drafters and with members of the Steering Committee before they embarked on their work.

- It was not possible to interview some who played a key role in the formation of the Forum, while some persons contacted did not respond.

- It was not possible to trace all persons who participated in the three Forum meetings through records. The response rate of those contacted was low.

Members of the Forum Secretariat, Forum Steering Committee, National Ministries of Education and Agencies engaged in full and frank discussion. The response rate to e-mail contact with the Steering Committee was very good. Despite the limitations mentioned above, we feel able to make some informed judgements on the questions posed in the terms of reference.

SECTION 2

THE IDEA OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATIVE FORUM

What were the original intentions in setting up the Forum? What was the background before and during the Jomtien conference, including the debate between the main partners at the time?

2.1 ORIGINAL INTENTIONS

The idea of an international consultative forum arose at the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien in March 1990. It was seen to be part of the 'follow-up' action to the Declaration and Framework for Action endorsed at Jomtien.

2.1.1 Background: The Jomtien Conference

The *Final Report of the World Conference on Education for All* sets out the background to the EFA initiative, the context, the process of consensus building, the purpose, vision and requirements for EFA and the 'call for action'. The document provides an excellent source of reference for those now participating in the Forum and preparing for Dakar.

In February 1989 the executive heads of UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and the World Bank formally agreed to the proposal of Mr James Grant, Administrator of UNICEF, to jointly convene and sponsor the WCEFA. Scheduled to coincide with International Literacy Year, WCEFA was intended to renew a worldwide commitment to meeting the learning needs of children, youth and adults. These four agencies established and funded an Inter-Agency Commission (IAC), with an Executive Committee and a small Executive Secretariat. The Secretariat was located at UNICEF, New York and its role was to prepare and organize the conference in Jomtien. Wadi Haddad (World Bank) headed the executive secretariat and was assisted in his work by N.Colletta, N.Fisher, (UNICEF) M.Lakin (UNESCO) and Hilda Paqui (UNDP), with clerical staff drawn also from the four sponsors.

Prior to Jomtien, the IAC Executive Secretariat consulted with governments, major NGOs and others and organized a series of nine regional consultations. An International Steering Committee, comprising sponsors, co-sponsors, associate sponsors, the host country representative, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and regional participants advised the IAC. This basic structure of an Inter-Agency Commission advised by an International Steering Committee, a small Executive Committee of the Commission and a small Executive Secretariat, set up to launch WCEFA is important for understanding the composition and structure of the International Consultative Forum, its Secretariat and its Steering Committee which were established after Jomtien.

2.1.2 Participants and Sponsors

Participants at WCEFA, Jomtien were of four kinds:

- *Delegates from member states of the UN system (155)*. Delegations varied in size from 4-6 members. Some delegations brought observers. (The delegation from Benin for example comprised 4 members. The head of the delegation was S.E, M Germain Kadja, Ministre de l'Enseignement de Base, Mme. Prudencia Aimee Zinsou, Directeur, Etudes et Planification, M. Marc Agonsanou, Secrétaire, Commission Nationale des Ressources Humaines, and M. Ayouba Babio, Secrétaire General, Commission Nationale pour l'UNESCO).

- *Delegates from intergovernmental organizations (33)*. These included delegates and observers from UN organizations such as the UN, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, IIEP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNFPA, UIE, UNFPA, UNU, World Bank, WHO, WFP, and other inter-governmental organizations such as the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, AFESD, CARICOM, CEC, COL, CONFEMEN, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), ISESCO, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), OECD, OAU, Organization of American States, Organization of the Islamic Conference, South East Asian Ministers of Education Secretariat (SEAMES).

- *Delegates from non-governmental organizations and institutions (125)* including groups such as AALAE, FEMNET, ACCU, BRAC, AAU, EDC, ICEA, IDRC, YWCA.

- *Other Jomtien participants*, not members of delegations, were the roundtable chairpersons and presenters; exhibit managers; conference secretariat; and the WCEFA International Steering Group.

The Sponsors of Jomtien were of three kinds: Main Sponsors, Co-Sponsors and Associate Sponsors.

- The four Main Sponsors were UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

As the initiative became known, 18 governments and organizations joined in supporting it as co-sponsors and associate sponsors by contributing financial, material and intellectual support.

- The Co-Sponsors were:

  The Asian Development Bank, Denmark, Finland, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Japan, Norway, Sweden, UNFPA and USAID.

- The Associate Sponsors were:

  Australia, CIDA, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), IDRC, Italy, Switzerland, Bernard van Leer Foundation and WHO.

As a Joint Organizer of Regional Activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Inter-American Development Bank was a 'special sponsor'.

2.1.3 The Follow-up to Jomtien

A statement on follow-up action was endorsed by WCEFA on 9 March 1990. It appears as Appendix 3 in the Final Report of the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (WCEFA). Box 1 reproduces this Appendix.

The proposal for a 'consultative forum' is advanced in the text. The ideas lying behind it are lighlighted in italics.The idea of a mechanism at international level to 'serve' follow-up action by countries and agencies, to maintain a spirit of co-operation among countries, and to involve participation by national representatives, multilateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs is advanced. So too is the idea that this mechanism should rely on 'existing mechanisms', and on appropriate services offered by UNESCO.

Box 1
The Follow-Up to Jomtien

The ***Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*** can be seen providing a consensus view of the main tasks which need to be undertaken after the World Conference. These follow-up tasks concern countries, NGOs and the international community.

The principal follow-up will be at the country level. One of the first follow-up steps may, therefore, be for countries to conduct a 'needs assessment' to ascertain what resources are required to reach their goals. With regard to external resources, multilateral, bilateral agencies and NGOs for their part should endeavour to co-ordinate their actions at country-level more effectively.

Opportunities should be provided within the existing structures for a process of consultation among countries in regional or sub-regional settings to share mutual concerns and to discuss how multilateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs can best assist them.

Whatever follow-up mechanism may, at the same time, be established at international level, it should serve national follow-up action and support it effectively. Follow-up action at the international level would seek to maintain the spirit of co-operation amongst countries, multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as NGOs, which has been the hallmark of the World Conference.

UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank have agreed to increase support to basic education within each of their own planning frameworks, structures and resource allocation mechanisms. To this end, they have decided to meet annually to co-ordinate their own activities in the educational field.

As a consequence of the momentum generated by the World Conference, it is expected that national representatives, multilateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs would wish to be part of a consultative forum which will aim at promoting the EFA goals.

International follow-up action will rely on existing mechanisms. UNESCO has offered to provide appropriate services to facilitate the follow-up.

Source: World Conference on Education for All - Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Final Report, Appendix 3, 5-9 March 1990, Jomtien, Thailand.

The Forum was seen as part of a wider set of follow-up actions comprising:

- Needs assessment at the 'country' level and identification of resource requirements;
- More effective co-ordination by agencies (multilateral, bilateral and NGOs) at country-level;
- Consultation at regional and sub-regional level to share mutual concerns and knowledge of how multilateral, bilateral and NGOs can best assist countries;
- Increased support to basic education by the Main Sponsors of WCEFA and annual meetings to co-ordinate activities in the educational field.

Thus, as noted in Section 1, our evaluation of the Forum should, in principle, have embraced an assessment of the extent to which these other actions have been taken. This broader review falls well beyond the scope of the present study.

The statement presented in Box 1 did not 'emerge' easily. At least two representatives of bilateral agencies, one member of an inter-governmental organization and one member of the Executive Secretariat of the WCEFA Inter-Agency Commission recalled that the statement emerged out of side meetings at Jomtien and was a compromise of several agenda. The bilaterals played an important role in these meetings and indicated that they wished to have a voice in guiding the follow-up, alongside the voice of the main sponsors of Jomtien. There was also a perception that the World Bank had a clear vision of how the follow-up action should proceed: each country should develop a plan; the Bank could play a role in the co-ordination of the plan development; it could lend resources to meet resource gaps. The Nordic bilaterals, the EU and UNESCO, among others, resisted this strategy, viewing it as too 'top-down'.

The specific role of UNESCO in the follow-up process was problematic. On the one hand, UNESCO held the UN mandate in the field of education. On the other hand, UNESCO's reputation as an effective UN organization, was, at that time, weak. Moreover, the US spokesman who attended the side-meetings objected bluntly to the suggestion that UNESCO should play a leading role in the follow-up action. The US had recently withdrawn its membership of UNESCO.

Tension over UNESCO's role was reflected in the discussions about the siting of the follow-up office/secretariat. The executive secretariat for the Jomtien conference had been located at UNICEF, at its headquarters in New York. To those who attended the side-meetings at Jomtien, it appeared that the World Bank and UNICEF wanted the follow-up secretariat to be sited on their side of the Atlantic. UNESCO felt it had the mandate for EFA and that the office should be sited in Paris. The compromise was that the follow-up secretariat would be *sited at and serviced by* UNESCO, but it was not *part of* UNESCO.

The Forum was set up to preserve and project into the future the coalition that had given rise to Jomtien, which was then a real novelty, and generally perceived as the key to the success of Jomtien.... That this coalition would need a secretariat was obvious, but that it would be entrusted to UNESCO was a matter of arduous battles behind the scenes.

2.1.4 The Transition from IAC Secretariat to Forum Secretariat

The IAC and its secretariat continued to function for a few months after Jomtien. The first meeting of the Heads of Agencies after Jomtien was held at UNICEF on 23 July 1990. It was chaired by Mr Mayor, the UNESCO Director-General and attended by the other agency heads. At the meeting the agency heads acknowledged the considerable volume of resources deployed by the agencies for EFA, the variety of actions already undertaken and planned and the complementarity of the work of the four agencies.

At this meeting it was agreed that the Executive Secretariat of the IAC would be wound up at the end of July 1990 and that henceforth a Forum secretariat would function from UNESCO. The Executive Secretary of the Secretariat would be Michael Lakin.

2.1.5 The Role of the Forum and Idea of a Forum Steering Committee

At the Heads of Agency meeting of 23 July 1990 it was also suggested that the first meeting of an International Consultative Forum be convened in March 1991, one year after Jomtien. However, it soon became clear that the meeting would need to be held later in the year. It would eventually be held in December 1991.

There was also some discussion about the composition of the Forum. It should

> "include the head of one of the UN Economic Commissions, all major donors, a few prominent personalities from the private sector, a balanced representation of NGOs from South and North and not limited to those having some official recognition."
>
> (IAC record of meeting 23 July 1990).

Significantly, and despite Appendix 3 to the Jomtien conference report, there was no suggestion at this stage that the Forum should include representation of implementing agencies at the national and sub-national level (although meetings held subsequently in Paris, Delhi and Amman included many places for this all-important constituency).

At this and subsequent meetings of the heads of agencies the general feeling among the agencies was that

> "The real follow-up action would be carried out by each agency in its own style and with its own allies, but that a small unit at UNESCO could serve as a kind of low key, focal point for follow-up consultations and EFA promotional activities at global level. The four would contribute operating funds in equal shares and UNESCO set up a special account to receive the funds from the other IGOs, and later from the bilateral agencies as well."
>
> (Interview, Executive Secretary, Forum Secretariat, October 1999)

At the same time the heads of agencies also recognised that the 'real follow-up must be at country level and agreed to the suggestion that a small inter-agency working group should meet before the end of the year to formulate proposals for co-operation' (IAC meeting records July 1990). The concern about 'action and co-operation' in the developing countries was to be noted several times during the meetings held during 1991, though few concrete proposals for how this might come

about were made. The first meeting of the Forum, held eventually in Paris in December 1991, was seen as one important mechanism.

The role of the Forum was further clarified during that meeting by an *ad hoc* working group. Reporting on behalf of the working group Ms. Edi Sutherland-Addy (Deputy Minister of Education, Ghana and Head of the Ghanaian delegation at Jomtien) noted that there was general agreement that the Forum should be an advisory and consultative body and that it should monitor and analyse progress towards EFA:

> "The Forum should help keep basic education high on the world's agenda, that it can serve as a global catalyst and stimulus for action by governments, organizations and other partners involved in EFA but" – and this is a big BUT – "it was felt that action itself must be undertaken by these other entities i.e. governments and organizations. The Forum can provide general guidance to the international community by identifying successful and promising new approaches and by focussing attention on key issues of widespread concern ."
>
> (EFA Forum Meeting, Paris, December 1991. Conference record).

The idea of a Steering Committee for the Forum emerged at the 1991 Forum meeting. The Steering Committee was set up by the main sponsors and included themselves, a representative from another international governmental organization, several bilaterals and a representative of a group of NGOs committed to EFA. The other intergovernmental organization to be invited to join the Steering Committee was UNFPA. In 1998, UNFPA was invited to become a 'Convenor'.

The Secretariat's Executive Secretary recalls that out of this expanded group came the idea

> "of having 'extended programme initiatives' sponsored by two or more Steering Committee member organizations but carried out under the auspices of the EFA Forum, with minimal or no help needed from the Secretariat, which would continue to have its own activities, essentially information and advocacy, plus organizing meetings of the Steering Committee and the biennial global meetings of the Forum."
>
> (Interview, October 1999).

2.1.6 Activities of the Forum Steering Committee and Forum Secretariat

The activities of the Forum Steering Committee and the Forum Secretariat were conceived initially as being one and the same, with the Steering Committee steering the Secretariat in its work. Early in 1992 the Secretariat put forward a draft work plan for the work of the *Steering Committee and the Secretariat* for the period leading up to the second meeting of the Forum (Delhi 1993). The work plan had three main aims:

- To monitor progress by countries and organizations in implementing the Framework for Action.
- To maintain basic education on the world development agenda (advocacy).
- To promote dialogue and co-operation among EFA partners.

The core programme of work comprised six activities designed to meet these aims. The activities were to

- Organize the second meeting of the Forum
- Organize three meetings of the Steering Committee
- Draft and send letters to heads of governments
- Publish the WCEFA monographs
- Publish the EFA 2000 Bulletin
- Create an EFA database and produce EFA status reports

2.1.7 The Forum Structure

By 1992, three important elements in the EFA Forum structure had been established. These were:

- The Forum, conceived of as a series of global meetings for EFA partners to discuss progress towards EFA and issues of mutual concern.
- The Forum Secretariat, housed in UNESCO, but operating separately from it, with a brief to provide information about EFA, engage in advocacy for EFA and organize the global meetings and the Steering Committee meetings.
- The Forum Steering Committee, closely linked with the work of the Secretariat, without a separate terms of reference.

It is important to distinguish these three carefully in discussion. Our interviews suggested that for some, these three bodies of people were distinct, with the Forum synonymous only with the Forum global meetings. For others, the notion of a Forum embraced all three, but with the above three elements clearly distinguishable. For still others the 'Forum' was synonymous with the 'Forum Steering Committee' or the Forum Secretariat. On one issue there was a clear consensus. The Forum, its Secretariat and Steering Committee should *not* become a new bureaucracy. They should build from and use existing mechanisms. Simultaneously these three were charged with maintaining the momentum of Jomtien, of supporting the implementation of EFA, and of engaging in advocacy for EFA. To the evaluators it seems clear that the three elements had and have linked but distinct roles and resource needs, and that the apparent absence of consensus over what these were and are has compromised the effectiveness of all three.

Their effectiveness has also been compromised by the absence of widespread discussion of how they are thought to link in practice with the other four Jomtien follow-up mechanisms, described in Section 2.1.4. Though charged with 'serving national follow action' and maintaining a 'spirit of co-operation amongst countries, multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as NGOs' what these have meant in practice has not been the subject of critical reflection.

2.1.8 From Master to Servant

The notion of 'service' contained a basic contradiction. The Forum had been created out of Jomtien. Jomtien was a creature of four powerful inter-governmental organizations. The first meeting of the Forum created the Forum Steering Committee and its Secretariat. The 'Main Sponsors' of Jomtien became the 'Convenors' of the Forum. The Forum was intended to 'serve national follow-up action and serve it effectively'. From their pro-active role as initiators and mobilisers, the Convenors now set in place mechanisms intended to be re-active and supportive of an international process in which national agencies were expected to play a pro-active role. But national agencies had neither played, nor were about to play, a strong role in the international process. The transition from master to servant, in a situation where the new master (national follow-up action) was, in many contexts, very weak, was likely to lead to ambiguities of roles, authorities and responsibilities.

2.2 CURRENT AND CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE FORUM

If these were the official and initial intentions of the Forum, how are they now construed? Do people recall the initial intentions in ways that deviate from the original? And how do those who have joined the Forum only recently perceive its purpose?

Interview extracts presented in Box 2 provide insight on the perceived purpose by members of the EFA Steering Committee. They also provide a useful checklist for discussion of what the Forum could be in the future.

The original three purposes – monitoring, advocacy and promoting partnerships – are recalled well by members of the convening agencies and the Forum Secretariat. At the same time, some perceived a wider brief for the Forum. At least one member of a convening agency saw mobilization of resources for EFA as one of the main functions of the Forum, a view that contrasts markedly with that expressed by a member of a bilateral agency. For the latter, neither the Forum nor its Steering Committee was set up to raise funds, a point thought to have been discussed and raised to a matter of 'principle'.

The comment on the title of the Forum – the International *Consultative* Forum - is thought provoking. Who is consulting whom and on what within the Forum? How consultative is advocacy? How consultative is monitoring? How consultative is partnership-building? Was it the intention that national governments and others at national/local level should be able to consult and seek advice from a global Forum? Or was the Forum intended to operate only at a global level with international organizations consulting with each other?

And who was to be 'monitored' and by whom? The member from the South clearly sees the monitoring function directed towards the original convenors. Members of the convening agencies, by contrast, were more likely to see the monitoring function directed towards national governments.

Was it the intention that the Forum should, as a member of one of the convening agencies, assist countries in the development and implementation of country action plans? Certainly the

development of country action plans was seen as part of the general follow-up (cf. Box 1). But what was thought to be the role of the Forum when national and other organizations did not initiate plans and actions? The statement of the Forum's purpose at the 1991 Forum meeting in Paris by the *ad hoc* working group, headed by an African government minister, implies that the Forum's role was *not* to intervene in planning and action (*cf.* the BIG BUT), but to confine itself to providing 'general guidance to the international community by identifying successful and promising new approaches and by focussing attention on key issues of widespread concern'.

The Forum, the Forum Secretariat and the Forum Steering Committee were created in response to concerns raised with respect to mechanisms that were needed to follow-up on the World Conference. Jomtien was not to be an event but the initiation of an ongoing process. From the above analysis it is clear that the operations and interrelations of these mechanisms were not anticipated in fine detail. Terms of reference for each, and in relation to each other, were not worked through. All three began life as loosely organized coalitions of interests of different EFA stakeholders, with the interests of convenors predominant. Mandates were unclear. Tensions and contradictions were inevitable.

Box 2
Perceptions of the Forum's Purpose

Convenors and Forum Secretariat

The main functions of the Forum are monitoring, advocacy and partnership building. The Forum was set up to preserve and project into the future the 'coalition' that had given rise to Jomtien which was then a novelty and generally perceived as the key to the success of Jomtien.

The Forum was established to

- develop and follow up the outcomes of Jomtien
- assure documentation of the follow-up
- assist in the mobilization of interest
- assist in the mobilization of resources for EFA
- assist implementation of country action plans

The Forum's main tasks have been grouped in three clusters or axes (i) advocacy and information (ii) monitoring EFA, and (iii) promoting dialogue and partnerships between the stakeholders. Although the specific activities within each cluster have evolved somewhat over the decade, the three axes of its programme have been there throughout.

The main work of the Forum is advocacy and being a kind of 'watchdog'.

The purpose of the Forum is advocacy, monitoring and networking at a global level.

Bilateral Agencies

The Forum is a loose mechanism, less concerned with driving an agenda than with keeping track of progress and the sharing of lessons learned.

The full title of the Forum, International *Consultative* Forum, should in itself be seen as an indication of its purpose. Presumably, the basic idea was that national ministries, NGOs and others at the local/national level should be able to seek advice and guidance through consultation with the Forum, defined as an internationally composed body. The impact and effectiveness of the Forum should be assessed in that context.

> "It has.... always been clear within the Forum, and even more so in the Steering Committee, that they were <u>not</u> set up for the purpose of pledging for fund raising to support education in the developing countries. It is my personal feeling that this has been a matter of principle to which all members have readily agreed."
>
> (Steering Committee member)

South

The original intention was to keep pushing the Jomtien message around the world, but mainly to keep the World Bank and donors aware of these goals.

SECTION 3

ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTFALLS

What activities have been conducted by the Forum and what are the effects?

3.1 FORUM ACTIVITIES

As noted in Section 2.1.8, by the end of the decade, there were many notions of what and who the Forum was and comprised. The most inclusive use of the term embraces all that has happened in a structured way since Jomtien and therefore includes the work of the Consultative Forum meetings, the Steering Committee, the Management Committee (formed some time later), and the Secretariat. The more restrictive meaning is the three meetings held in Paris in 1991, New Delhi in 1993 and Amman in 1996.

It is the more inclusive use of the term Forum that will be adopted here in addressing the question of what activities have been conducted by the Forum and what have been their effects. The activities of the Forum over the past decade have been substantial. In summary these have consisted of:

- International meetings convened in Paris (1991), New Delhi (1993), Amman (1996) and, shortly, in Dakar (April 2000).
- Regional and sub-regional meetings which have preceded the above.
- The establishment and development of a Forum Steering Committee, and subsequently a Management Committee.
- The publications programme of the Forum secretariat.
- The EFA assessment exercises in preparation for Amman, and now Dakar.
- A series of consultation and review processes at international and regional level to generate the Dakar Declaration and Framework for Action.

3.1.1. The Paris Meeting

The Paris meeting in 1991 focussed on the nature of the international arrangements to be put in place. While some respondents felt that this meeting was not very productive it resulted in a consensus about the role of the Forum, whose full title was the International Consultative Forum on Education for All. Future Forum meetings were to give general guidance and direction to the EFA activities. A representative sample of countries, agencies, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties were to be invited. It was considered impossible to include all

countries in every Forum meeting. Hence, the attendance of representatives from different countries in each major region would rotate. The mandate of the Forum was to:

- Monitor progress
- Co-ordinate EFA activities
- Share and exchange information and ideas
- Foster collaboration

To support the work of the Forum a Secretariat would be established guided by a Steering Committee.

It is important to note the shifts in direction that took place between that envisaged in the Jomtien Framework for Action and that agreed at the Paris Forum. In Paris, advocacy for EFA and the encouragement of new partners were not explicitly mentioned, while co-ordination and progress monitoring were explicitly included. The Forum was to take responsibility for monitoring progress in circumstances in which it had no in-built capacity to perform this function. It was also to 'co-ordinate' EFA activities, without authority over sovereign countries or autonomous agencies. Structurally, the Consultative Forum was better placed to share and exchange information and ideas and to foster collaboration than to monitor and co-ordinate EFA activities.

3.1.2 The New Delhi Meeting

The New Delhi Meeting in 1993 brought together the nine most populous developing countries of the world, plus a few others, along with donor countries and agencies. The end result was the creation of the E-9 initiative. The idea was born in the EFA Secretariat with UNESCO, UNICEF and UNFPA as the chief promoters. The basic concept of the E-9 initiative was to bring together, and establish a working alliance of developing countries with populations of over 100 million. Together, these have approximately half of the total world population, some two-thirds of the illiterate adults, and face the greatest challenges in meeting the EFA objectives. From a strategic perspective this initiative has to be highly commended with respect to its potential for impacting EFA targets. By fostering collaboration, sharing of information, ideas and best practices and by being motivated by the actions of others in similar circumstances, the E-9 initiative has much to recommend it.

Of interest, but probably not anticipated, was the speed with which the E-9 countries took control of the initiative. As a result, they have their own Secretariat directed by the Ministers of Education of the nine countries who meet annually to review progress. Of equal importance is the fact that recently the World Health Organisation (WHO), adopted this model by establishing their Ten Largest Countries initiative in promoting Health for All. Further, links have recently been established between these two initiatives in Education and Health that essentially target the same countries.

3.1.3. The Amman Meeting

The preparation for the Amman Forum in 1996 took account of the Indicative Phasing of Implementation for the 1990s set out in the Jomtien Framework for Action that had suggested

that a mid-decade review be undertaken between 1995 and 1996. Regional Meetings of modest size and attempts at data gathering therefore preceded the Amman Meeting. In addition, Amman was larger and more representative of countries than either of the two previous Forum meetings.

Amman raised four important issues that have persisted to the end of the decade

- EFA was increasingly being interpreted in terms of years of schooling. The genius of Jomtien was the compromise and balance it effected between the concepts of schooling and learning, evident in its title and sub-title: *Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs.* Amman sought to reinstate the balance by stating its concerns about quality and learning.

- The EFA voice had not been sufficiently heard at the country and regional levels. Some momentum for EFA had been lost at the country and regional levels since Jomtien.

- The quality of data presented at the Forum was questionable. Several countries and agencies stated their concerns about the accuracy and validity of the data presented.

- The work and voice of organizations of civil society involved in EFA were not being sufficiently recognized and heeded.

3.1.4 The End-of-decade Assessment

Mindful of the fact that the Framework for Action suggested that governments, organizations and development agencies evaluate achievements at the end of decade and mindful also of the sharp criticisms of the data presented at Amman, the Steering Committee and Secretariat began to plan for the EFA 2000 Assessment shortly after Amman.

Accordingly the Assessment has:

- been planned and executed over a period of almost three years;
- included capacity building exercises that have extended to the country level;included the establishment of Regional Technical Advisory Groups, (RTAG) which have co-ordinated and supported the country exercises.
- involved functional collaboration between the Secretariat and multilateral and bilateral agencies supporting EFA in the use and application of both technical and financial resources.

The Assessment has been the Forum's most extensive and collaborative activity since Jomtien. It includes national assessments of EFA progress, thematic studies, and evaluations of learning achievement. The assessment has gone further in reviving interest, renewing commitment and re-invigorating action towards the target dimensions of the Framework for Action than any other EFA activity undertaken over the decade. A senior official of an African ministry of education commented that the assessment had been of 'inestimable value'. Similar expressions have been made in the Caribbean.

The main thrust of the EFA 2000 assessment has been to measure the progress achieved by governments and countries. It has also included an evaluation of the financial contributions of funding agencies to EFA.

3.1.5 The End-of-Decade Regional Consultations

The Indicative Phasing also suggested that government, organizations and development agencies undertake comprehensive policy reviews at the regional and global levels in 2000/2001. The Steering Committee therefore scheduled 10 Sub-regional Consultations and five regional consultations leading to the global conference to be held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000.

The assessment activities are feeding into the sub-regional and regional consultations and appear to have generated new momentum. While the excitement and expectations of WCEFA in 1990 can probably not be matched or surpassed, the end-of-decade EFA activities have generated a new vigour and vitality for EFA.

3.1.6 EFA Publications

The Forum launched a series of publications after Jomtien. The first significant publications were three monographs synthesizing 48 Jomtien roundtables, published in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The final reports of the Forum Meetings in Paris, (on universal primary education), New Delhi (on quality basic education) and Amman (the mid-decade review) were published in English, French and Spanish. Other important publications have been the *Status and Trends* Reports, the *EFA 2000 Bulletin* and Posters. Poster and essay competitions have been held internationally. Attractive and excellent in their physical quality, some doubts have been expressed about the quality of data included in some of the publications, especially those derived from the Amman meeting. Good contacts with networks of journalists have also maintained the profile of EFA in the international press. So too have the three regional networks of journalists committed to the work of EFA, initiated by the Forum, in collaboration with the World Association of Newspapers. The participating journalists contributed to an occasional network newsletter and used it and their own articles to give better coverage of EFA issues. In 1998, the World Association of Newspapers contributed to Media and Education Workshops jointly with the Forum and contributing a sum of $26,000 for this purpose.

The 'publications' programme has relied almost entirely on the production of print material. Some videos of educational innovations have been produced. One respondent suggested that advocacy and dissemination might have been more widespread and effective had more use been made of short inputs on international TV networks such as CNN or BBC World. This is one option for the future.

3.1.7 EFA Web Site

The Secretariat has established and maintained a web site that has disseminated information concerning EFA activities and achievements. With approximately 4,000 hits per month, the site is beginning to attract an audience and has the potential to be a very important tool in the EFA arsenal.

3.2 EFA AND THE UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

How closely has the EFA agenda been linked up with other facets of the UN development agenda?

Actions to link the EFA agenda with other facets of the development agenda had started very shortly after Jomtien, if not at Jomtien itself. At the first post-Jomtien meeting of the heads of the agencies, the Director-General of UNESCO noted

> "the timeliness of the present meeting, occurring as it did after the publication of major reports on the human dimensions of development." (23 July 1990).

A few of our respondents were well acquainted with the subsequent history of links between the EFA agenda and other facets of the UN development agenda, as expressed at conferences, in articles and resolutions. Interpretations of the documents vary. Some read them as a strong endorsement for EFA. Others, pointing to non-prominent references to EFA, feel that the endorsement for EFA has been weak.

Strategically, WCEFA was well placed with respect to the UN summits that followed. Starting with the World Summit for Children shortly after Jomtien, and followed by the Conference on the Environment in Rio in 1992, the theme of EFA was integrated to an extent in the commitments of all major summits and conferences. The UN General Assembly endorsed a resolution on Education for All on 12 December 1997.

The integration of the EFA agenda may not have been as great as it could have been. Two observations are pertinent. First, the World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 1995 was by far the largest of the World Conferences and Summits held in the 1990s. Over 14,000 persons attended the Summit. The largest gathering of world leaders, 117 heads of State or Government, attended the Summit. Commitment 6 of the Programme for Action incorporates all aspects of the target dimensions of the EFA Framework for Action and certainly endorses the spirit of the World Declaration on EFA. However, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action makes no specific mention of EFA or the World Conference on Education. Specific mention, however, is made of the World Summit for Children, the Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the International Conference on Population and Development. Time did not allow us to determine the basis for the omission of the World Conference on Education for All from this list. but it may be due to the fact that the Jomtien Conference was not, strictly speaking, a UN conference nor even an inter-governmental conference.

Second, the Secretary General of the United Nations established a United Nations Development Group about two years ago. Its primary task was to ensure the co-ordination of the implementation of development programmes of UN funds and programmes at country level. Recently, WHO was invited to join the group. UNESCO, the host UN agency with respect to EFA, is not part of this group.

The Forum Secretariat had been active in advocating the inclusion of EFA goals in other UN

agenda. Members of the Secretariat were present at most of these UN Conferences and organized special side-events on EFA. The Secretariat was also quite effective in lobbying behind the scenes for EFA to figure prominently in the conference recommendations. Most recently, the EFA Forum has been able to co-opt into its steering committee the person responsible for follow-up of another UN Conference. This last observation underlines the important and powerful role of particular individuals and relationships between individuals in different organizations, in making things happen, and in moving forward ideas and resolutions within organizations.

However, as one respondent pointed out, notwithstanding their sponsorship by UN agencies, Jomtien, Paris, Delhi, Amman and Dakar were neither official UN, nor inter-governmental conferences. This has meant that EFA received rather less attention than it should. Those advocating EFA have to work extra hard to have it noticed and included in other UN conference agenda.

The desirability of linking the EFA agenda with UN agenda was not in doubt. It appeared to be taken for granted by all respondents and was seen as important for the text of Dakar and other future EFA documentation. All the available evidence points to the fact that EFA has been integrated into UN conference and summit commitments during the 1990s. Although not an official UN conference, Jomtien and the World Declaration in particular, appear to have gained some 'quasi official status' over the decade. Education, and particularly basic education, have been recognized as multi-faceted with wide cross-sectoral linkages and implications.

Not so self-evident is the extent to which EFA is integrated into the UN efforts to improve the effectiveness of delivery of developmental assistance to countries. Many, especially those working in national agencies, commented adversely on the co-ordination of the work of the different UN agencies at country level. This should be a matter of some concern to the Forum and for the future mechanisms for achieving EFA in specific country settings. 'Effective co-ordination' of EFA activities, even within the narrow context of the UN Convenors, requires authority. Neither the Forum nor the UN system has that authority. Only host governments carry such authority.

In the absence of formal authority and in an attempt to improve co-ordination of UN efforts at national level, the Forum sent a letter signed by the heads of the convening agencies to their field offices directing/imploring them to consult regularly together at country level, with the host government, and to try to show shared commitment to EFA (Former Executive Secretary, Forum Secretariat). The issue of UN co-ordination at country level will be addressed further in the section on partnership (3.5.6)

3.3 THE FORUM AS PLATFORM

Has the Forum constituted an appropriate platform for the tasks entrusted in it?

The term 'platform' can mean a stage, display place, raised area, political manifesto or political programme. We assumed that the term as used by the drafters of our terms of reference meant 'stage'.

Our discussions suggest that the term 'arena' may provide a better description of the Forum than 'platform'. The Forum 'arena' has brought together countries, agencies and organizations of civil society that are acting to implement EFA in ways that have been collaborative and isolated, co-

operative and conflicting. Sometimes the arena is full of different constituencies, taking turns to perform, to initiate, to react, and to chat in the intervals. At others, the arena is fairly empty with different and smaller constituencies, different priorities, different performers, and different audiences.

The difference between 'platform' and 'arena' highlights different conceptions of the EFA Forum that have been evident from its inception. The Forum as 'platform' fits the conception of EFA as a production by the development agencies in general and the Convenors in particular. The Forum as 'arena' connotes a loosely organized coalition, in which participants act on the basis of shared assumptions about general purpose and desirable outcomes, but are driven by different imperatives and employ different strategies.

This difference in perspective is important. Several respondents noted that EFA went into the doldrums or hibernation after Jomtien, waking up only after the outcome of the mid-decade review. This was consistent with a view of the Forum as a platform or stage for display. Others, acknowledging the absence of a 'good show' at Amman, commented that it took time for countries and agencies to develop policies, establish programmes and mount projects to implement these policies. Hence there was little to report and share until about the time of the mid-decade review. The show was not stage managed, and disappointment with the main acts should not be attributed to the stage managers. Several elements of the Forum manifest 'arena' rather than 'platform' characteristics. The World Declaration and Framework for Action were statements of voluntary collective intent. They were not binding agreements, such as would be the case of a treaty. Membership of all the Forum mechanisms is premised on the notion of personal capacity without institutional or national obligation. While there is a shared vision of EFA, countries, development agencies and NGOs are all participating and acting on the basis of situational imperatives arising from their own circumstances. They are not all playing to the same tune and the performances at the big shows may therefore attract meagre reviews from the critics.

The Forum is characterized by a shared vision of basic education for all, despite diversity. Countries, development agencies and organizations collaborate only to define the broad contours of EFA diversity. Each group of actors is itself heterogeneous.. Even the UN Convenors are diverse. UNESCO is a specialized governmental agency whose mission and mandate includes education. UNDP is a programme that is largely country defined and driven. UNICEF and UNFPA are funds that target special interests, children and population. The World Bank, as its name implies, is a bank. Each of these multilateral agencies shares the vision of EFA for different reasons that relate to their unique mission and mandate.

Diversity also characterizes the bilateral agencies that are part of the EFA Forum. While basic education may appear in their respective frameworks, these in turn reflect respective government policies.

Countries are diverse in terms of their levels and types of development, and also in the ways in which they have, historically, provided for EFA. The diversity of ways in which the so-called 'developed' countries have met EFA during the twentieth century underlines the importance of recognizing and understanding diversity.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may be even more diverse than countries in the conditions under which they deliver EFA. NGOs operate at many different levels in the global arena. Some, usually referred to as the international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are large and powerful, effective in raising funds, and operate globally, or at least, internationally. Others may be large, powerful and well-funded within particular national settings; while other

national NGOs are small, limited in power and poorly funded. Some NGOs operate only locally and receive most of their operating budgets on sub contract from government agencies. .

If, then, we rephrase the question as 'has the Forum constituted an appropriate arena for the tasks entrusted to it?', the short answer is a qualified yes, for the following reasons:

- The Forum is unique as a global mechanism of consultation and collaboration between countries, multilateral and bilateral development agencies and organizations of civil society. While the mandate from the Framework for Action prompted the international community to make appropriate arrangements using existing mechanisms as far as this was possible, no existing mechanism in education, or any other area, could be found that brought together countries, agencies and organizations of civil society at the global level. The Forum was fashioned to fill this vacuum. The Forum is therefore appropriate by design. It should be noted that in several regions of the world, for example, in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and South East Asia, entities had been established that brought ministers of education, ministry of education officials and funding agencies together on at least an annual basis to discuss educational development in that region. The Forum is unique on at least two counts. First, in addition to ministers, officials and donor agencies, the Forum also includes the intellectual community, the private sector and international and national organizations of civil society. As such the Forum is far more inclusive that the entities that predate it. Second, the Forum has given voice and visibility to basic education. Global scope, inclusiveness and a focus on basic education give the Forum its unique identity.

- The Forum's mission was to ensure that Jomtien and EFA were not treated as one-off special events or slogans but rather continued as a process that would contribute to the accomplishment of the EFA objectives. Its achievement lies in part in the treatment of Jomtien as an important milestone in the continuing quest for EFA.

- The Forum succeeded in avoiding the creation of a new bureaucracy. Its structures were 'light and informal'. It did not become a 'donors club'. Its budget has been relatively low and its returns should be seen in that light.

- At the end of the decade, the Forum is still working, neither flawlessly nor perfectly, but working none the less. It has managed to deliver both the mid- and end-of-decade assessments as suggested by the Framework for Action and, in modest ways, has fostered collaboration between the partners engaged in the EFA effort.

- While WCEFA and the Jomtien Declaration have been, and continue to be sources of inspiration, the main impetus for the movement toward EFA goals has come from the internal imperatives of the countries, agencies and organizations. As such, all partners can rightly claim responsibility for the progress made or share blame for the unfinished business. The Forum cannot claim to have been the driving force in EFA. However, it has been the focal point and the symbol of the shared global vision and the arena in which that shared vision has been kept alive.

The qualification to the positive response is entered on two counts.

- The Forum has contributed only minimally to building and sharing a global knowledge base for EFA. One respondent remarked that the Jomtien meeting was a 'three-ring circus'. Participants could choose the ring or rings that appealed to them. One ring offered the plenary

sessions, which did not appeal to many but which produced the World Declaration and Framework for Action. A second offered the roundtables and seminars that allowed some of the best minds in the world on the particular subjects to put forward their ideas. Several of these roundtables were controversial and therefore exciting and stimulating. The third ring was the display of materials and exhibitions of EFA activity mounted by various groups. In this respondent's view the Forum has only marginally picked up on the activities in the second ring.

This view was reinforced by several who felt that the Forum had not provided the intellectual leadership that some anticipated or hoped it would have done. Several respondents were firmly of the view that the intellectual process has been limited and output has been low largely because the Forum has focussed on the logistical dimensions of EFA and has paid insufficient attention to content, reflection and ideas. The Forum should have established stronger links with the academic community with respect to research results of importance, connected with individuals and groups implementing innovative approaches, and promoted Think Tanks formed on an *ad hoc* basis to confront and offer solutions to difficult problems. For example, in the early years, one of the Convenors contributed funds to the Forum Secretariat for a 'meta-analysis' of theories of learning. A prominent university in the North was commissioned to conduct this analysis but very little became of this effort, for reasons that are not clear. In the time available it was not possible to determine the extent to which this early experience affected the work of the Forum in this area. It should also be noted that in several regions the end-of-decade assessment has benefited from an impressive number of monographs that indicate a fair measure of intellectual output concerning EFA activities in those regions.

- While the Forum has engaged in advocacy and encouraged countries in this direction, much of the advocacy work has been of low profile and directed at the converted. Relatively little has been done that has targeted the offices of presidencies and prime ministers, ministers of finance, business leaders and non-education managers within the multilateral and bilateral agencies. At the meeting of the four Convenors held at UNICEF in 1989, where the ideas of the World Conference and the EFA decade were born, dialogue with kings and queens, and presidents and prime ministers was very much part of the envisaged portfolio of advocacy activity.

In its defence, the Forum could point to the fact that the Paris Forum has defined its roles and function quite precisely (cf. Section 2). Intellectual leadership was not part of the mandate and therefore has not occupied a major portion of the attention of the mechanisms of the Forum. At the same time it might be argued that under the rubric of 'information' the Secretariat made an effort to draw attention to a range of studies and other publications, many of them written by well-known intellectual leaders in education. The editing, synthesis and production in four languages of the three monographs based on 48 roundtables was a major undertaking. And the Bulletin, the Website, and the Status and Trends reports have focussed on making accessible to a very wide audience issues of substance.

The material point for this evaluation is that intellectual leadership is not inconsistent or inappropriate to the objectives of the Forum. Less than adequate attention was paid to intellectual leadership and advocacy, not because of structural or functional defect, but rather by virtue of priority and focus over the last decade. Both priority and focus could be changed in the future. These options are for the Forum to debate. In our view intellectual leadership and research could and should become a major role for the Forum.

We should also draw attention to the fact that our respondents focussed on different components of the Forum when considering whether the Forum had constituted an appropriate platform for the tasks entrusted in it. One focussed on two of its components but distinguished them clearly:

> "The Forum (in the sense of the large meetings) has not been capable of functioning as a means for provision of guidance and consultation, as implied in its full title, the international consultative meeting. The large meetings have tended to take the form of a small conference for educators.... (But) there is a notable difference between the Forum and the Steering Committee.... In a way, the Committee would in some respects appear to be the Forum, at least in its functions as a provider of guidance and a means for mutual consultation between all the partners involved."

Together, these points indicate the need for a much clearer definition of the goals and terms of reference of each of the elements of the Forum. They also indicate a need for greater understanding of the possible actions of all contributors to EFA, whether as part of a Forum or not.

Finally, in the assessment of whether the Forum has constituted an appropriate platform or arena for the tasks entrusted it, we might also have posed to all our respondents the counterfactual question. What would EFA have been over the decade, without the Forum? The question was posed to two African EFA National Assessment Co-ordinators.

> "Without the Forum the EFA agenda would have been forgotten.". "Reports after Jomtien would have been put in a drawer...".

3.4 SPONSORS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

How have the sponsors assumed their respective responsibilities?

The lack of clarity of this question presented some of our respondents and ourselves with some difficulty. What and to whom are assumed to be the responsibilities of the Sponsors? And who are assumed to be the Sponsors?

The original Sponsors were of three types – Main, Co- and Associate sponsors. The sub classification was a function of the size of the financial contribution each made to the mounting of WCEFA (cf. Section 2). By precedent, therefore, we infer that one responsibility of sponsors is the funding of the work of the EFA Forum.

The *main* sponsors became the 'Convenors' of the Forum. Despite this change of nomenclature, it is clear that many use the terms Convenor and Sponsor interchangeably, notwithstanding the fact that there were always three categories of sponsor. For the purpose of this evaluation we have assumed that the term Sponsor was intended by the drafters of the terms of reference to refer to the Convenors of the Forum – UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and UNDP, joined subsequently in 1998 by UNFPA.

We were unable to locate any document that set out the responsibilities of the Sponsors.

We explained in Section 2.1.4 that the follow-up to Jomtien was seen to comprise at least five strands of responsibility and action. One was the Forum. A second was a commitment by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank

> "to increase support to basic education within each their own planning frameworks, structures and resources allocation mechanisms. To this end they have decided to meet annually to co-ordinate their own activities in the educational field."
>
> (Jomtien Report, Appendix 3)

A separate study addresses the financial commitments to EFA by the multilateral agencies, (and the bilateral development agencies), through their own planning frameworks. As this falls well beyond the scope of this study, we will confine ourselves to the more limited question of the extent to which UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and UNFPA have assumed their financial responsibilities with respect to the Forum.

3.4.1 Funding Constraints

With respect to the financial contribution of Sponsors, it is necessary to note that the nature, structure and *modi operendi* of the different sponsors imposed constraints on how, and in what areas, they contributed to the work of the Forum. For example, UNFPA is constrained to contribute only in areas related to population education even if a broad interpretation is adopted in defining those areas. UNDP operates on the basis of country programmes worked out with each country. After Jomtien UNDP took a decision not to play a major role at the global level. Support for EFA at the country level from UNDP is relatively easy provided that countries identify basic education as a priority for assistance.

Contributions to global initiatives pose problems that are not easily circumvented by some agencies. Funding systems in the World Bank, for example, currently inhibit the possibility of funding global initiatives, global agendas and global secretariats. The Bank President's contingency funds were used for Jomtien. The same is true for UNDP, the regional multilateral banks and for some bilateral agencies. These restrictions were not put on the table when the heads of agencies committed themselves to supporting the Forum as a follow-up mechanism to follow through on Jomtien. Rather they have become clear in the process of follow through.

The World Bank has an internal competitive process in apportioning a pool of grant funds, annually, that can be deployed in ways that are complementary to the Bank's loans in countries and regions. Strategically it is better to win a block of funds periodically than to compete for small amounts annually. A block of funds for EFA was allocated from this source and contributed to UNICEF, which had some discretion in its application to EFA activities. Therefore some of the resources used by UNICEF to support Forum activities in the regions came from the World Bank but would not have been attributed to the latter as part of its obligations as a Convenor. The Bank also has an internal market in providing services to other entities in the Bank. Hence, when the Education Division contributes experts to support EFA activities, such as the Forum's end-of-decade assessment, it is billed for those experts by the entities providing them. Further, task managers for different countries and regions have a fair degree of autonomy in supporting initiatives in their regions. Support for EFA initiatives may therefore not enjoy a uniform level of support across all regions of the world. With these examples of constraints faced by sponsors in supporting the work of the Forum financially the following comments appear to be reasonable.

3.4.2 Funding Contributions

As the 'host' sponsor, UNESCO has housed and staffed the Forum Secretariat since its establishment. Accordingly, UNESCO has made by far the largest financial contribution to the work of the Forum. Financial contributions from other sponsors and agencies cover meetings of the Forum, Steering and Management Committees and activities mounted by the Forum. UNICEF has made regular and substantial untied financial contributions to the work of the Forum and has been able to support core functions and activities. In addition, it has provided strong support through its field offices for EFA and Forum activities in different regions. The World Bank has made periodic untied contributions to the work of the Forum as well as contributions to support specific activities. In addition, where EFA activities were entered into the Bank's internal competition for grant funds, the block of funds allocated was contributed to UNICEF to support EFA activities. Some of UNICEF's consistent and strong support for the work of the Forum has been made possible by the Bank's support to UNICEF for this purpose. Most of the support contributed by UNFPA has been tied to specific activities that can be related to the mission of that fund. UNDP has been constrained by its funding mechanisms and has only made modest direct contributions to the work of the Forum. Much of the UNDP support has been at the country level and to the work in particular regions.

During the Jomtien decade most UN agencies were coping with shrinking resources. This necessitated the restructuring of operations, down sizing, and various cost cutting, cost containment and cost recovery measures that have had far reaching implications for their operations. The EFA Forum therefore was not established at the most opportune time financially for several sponsoring agencies. That each of the UN convenors in some way honoured at least some aspects of its undertaking as a Sponsor, indicates commitment to the EFA goals and therefore to the Forum.

Table 1 presents the source and size of funds received by the EFA Forum account held by UNESCO in Paris from different sources over the period 1992-1999. It excludes 'commitments' to the EFA 2000 Assessment which have not yet been received, and also funds (in some cases substantial) contributed by agencies to the work of the Forum in the regions, but not channelled through the Paris account. Significantly it excludes the very substantial contribution in kind made annually by UNESCO.

Table 1 suggests that in the early years, UNICEF and the World Bank, together with UNESCO, contributed substantially to the operation of the Forum. UNICEF has remained a constant and major contributor over the subsequent period. UNDP and UNFPA contributed few funds at the global level. The World Bank made substantial contributions in 1993 and 1995.

Sweden became a major and regular contributor as early as 1993, and was joined shortly after by Norway and Denmark. Italy and the Netherlands became contributors in 1995 and Finland in 1996. Germany joined as a contributor in 1998 and the UK and France in 1999. It is clear that the bilaterals have enabled the Forum to maintain a work programme for much of the post-Jomtien decade. Without these substantial contributions the work of the Forum would probably have folded.

Table 1

Financial Contributions to the Forum's Global Account, 1992 – 1999

Agency	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	Total
UNICEF	115.0	116.0	110.0	200.0	80.0	80.4	130.0	31.9	864.4
UNFPA				11.0					11.0
UNDP								15.0	15.0
IBRD		232.0		140.0					372.0
ADB								250.0	
Denmark			70.0	70.0	70.0	70.0	70.0	66.5	416.5
Finland					98.2		89.6	169.1	358.9
Netherlands				50.0	100.0	50.0	527.0	773.0	1,500.0
Norway			72.6				539.1		611.7
Sweden		158.9	57.4	102.9	83.5	37.5	515.1		955.1
France								46.0	46.0
Italy				45.0	200.0	50.0		100.0	395.0
Germany							221.9	301.7	523.7
UK								353.1	353.1
World Association of Newspapers							26.1		

Source: Forum Steering Committee papers, February 2000.

N.B. The Table excludes 'commitments', and also funds channelled directly to regions and countries for Forum-related work. The Table also excludes the substantial contribution in kind made annually by UNESCO.

When the contributions of the Convenors are considered as a whole, the following points emerge:

- Each Convenor has attempted to fulfil its financial obligations to the Forum within the constraints placed upon it by respective missions, structure and *modi operendi*.

- The total contribution of the Convenors has been insufficient to support the work of the Forum. Contributions from the bilateral agencies have been absolutely critical, especially in the last five years.

- Bearing in mind that the principal criterion of EFA sponsorship type, originally, was the size of financial contribution, the continuing status of all main sponsors as 'Convenors' and also the status of some co- and associate sponsors as 'partners' is called into question.

It was clear during our discussions that several members of bilateral agencies were of the view that some of the Convenors were not currently meeting their financial responsibilities to the Forum. Table 1 provides evidence to support that view.

A slightly longer time perspective, however, indicates just how far the pendulum has swung. The former Executive Secretary of the Forum Secretariat recalls:

> "Once the EFA Forum became organized and had a proper Steering Committee, several bilateral agencies began to play a more active role, notably the Nordics, Netherlands, Italy and USAID. In the build up to the mid-decade review, some additional bilateral agencies became interested in joining in: Germany, and later, the UK (DFID). However, 'interest' did not necessarily manifest itself in funding of Forum activities. Initially the Forum's kitty was fed by the five original Convenors. Then after some blunt talk by the Bank's representative on the Steering Committee, the bilateral agencies began feeding the kitty too. By the time of the mid-decade review, most of the Forum funding came from the bilateral agencies, as the Bank and UNDP found it increasingly difficult to come through with their 'share'. Only UNICEF has been a consistently good player, and UNESCO through its support in kind (office space, supplies, staff salaries, and some services, e.g. translation, mailing)."

This view of funding over the *decade* provides some counter-balance to the current perception of several of the bilateral agencies. This is not to imply that some of the Convenors have reason to feel complacent. Table 1 speaks for itself. It is merely to set the question of funding contributions within the perspective of the post-Jomtien *decade*.

3.4.3 The Sponsors, the Jomtien Vision and the Forum

How has EFA been conceived by the EFA Forum partners, and especially the Convenors, during the period since 1990?

Although we have limited ourselves above to addressing the (main) sponsors' funding responsibilities to the Forum, and have deliberately excluded a discussion of their responsibilities to the EFA project more generally, there is at least one sense in which these two interact and cannot be separated. The Forum was established to follow-up the Jomtien 'expanded vision' for education. That vision was very broad in scope. With its emphasis on learning acquisition (Article 4), and on universalizing access and promoting equity (Article 3), it recognized that the

> "diversity, complexity, and changing nature of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults necessitate broadening and constantly redefining the scope of basic education to include the following components: Learning begins at birth... the main delivery system for the basic education of children outside the family is primary schooling...the basic learning needs of youth and adults are diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems." (Article 5).

Several of our respondents commented on the retreat from this expanded vision by some of the Convenors, and the implications this had for the work of the Forum.

> "It is a matter of historical accuracy to recall how the World Bank and UNICEF both reduced the Jomtien notion of EFA, more or less immediately after Jomtien, to focus almost exclusively on primary schooling. This was simply for corporate convenience. Non-formal education and literacy were seen as too small and too difficult to measure progress, too fragile administratively to absorb large amounts of agency funds, too weak as a political priority. UNESCO was left as a sort of non-formal and adult education agency, joined by UNDP with its concern for basic training related to the world of work.

UNFPA continued with its concept of population education and added female education to its agenda."

"The convenors have defaulted. Non-formal education for children and adults has been grossly neglected, notwithstanding some efforts made by the Bank and UNICEF. The UNESCO Hamburg conference on adult education was good. It put meat on the bones. The Forum should have taken up the ideas. Instead it defaulted back to the formal system of education. I would have expected a better balance between the formal and the informal."

A similar point has been made by Torres (1999) in a report *One Decade of Education for All: the Challenge Ahead.* Jomtien, she argues, was an attempt to meet the basic learning needs of the world's population *and* to redefine the vision and scope of basic education for children, youth and adults. The Jomtien statement of vision was itself the outcome of complex negotiation involving the WCEFA main sponsors.

"UNESCO advocated a broad understanding of education, encompassing adult literacy and education. UNICEF stressed the need to include early childhood development and initial education within *basic education.* UNICEF and UNESCO both defended the need to introduce flexible, diversified educational modalities, including non-formal education alternatives. The World Bank wanted to focus on the school system and primary education. UNDP did not adopt a particular stance on the issue." (Torres, 1999:6)

The final text of the World Declaration contained contradictions and inconsistencies. Importantly, countries brought their own understandings of 'basic education' to the conference and the text. Through its implementation, the concepts, principles and targets of EFA have 'shrunk' away from an expanded vision and back towards a conventional and restricted vision (Table 2).

Whether the expanded vision slipped out of focus because of the contradictions and tensions inherent in its negotiation, or because the practical business of programme implementation by donors and governments discouraged innovation, is unclear. The Forum Secretariat would claim that it attempted to cover the expanded vision in its publications. Perhaps the Forum constituents more generally, including the Sponsors, allowed the expanded vision to slip from view as they set about *their* practical business of planning and implementing programmes on the ground. As a consequence, the Forum's vision (as distinct from the Forum Secretariat's vision) became restricted.

Table 2

Restricted and Expanded Vision of Basic Education

RESTRICTED VISION (Conventional)	EXPANDED VISION (Education for All)
Directed at children	Directed at children, youth and adults
School-based	Based inside and outside school
Equates with primary education or a pre-established level of education	Is not measured by the number of years of study or certificates attained, but by what has effectively been learned
Responds to the teaching of specific subjects	Responds to the satisfaction of basic learning needs
Recognizes only one type of knowledge as valid; that acquired in the school system	Recognizes the validity of all types of knowledge, including traditional knowledge
Is uniform for all	Is diversified (basic leaning needs are different in different groups and cultures, as are the means and modalities to meet those needs)
Is static ('change' takes the form of periodic school and curriculum reforms)	Is dynamic and changes with the passage of time (educational reform is permanent)
Supply (institution, school system and administration) predominates in the definition of content and methods	Demand (students, family, social demand) predominates in the definition of content and methods
Focussed on teaching	Focussed on learning
Responsibility of Education Ministry (education as a sector and a sectoral responsibility)	Involves all Ministries and government bodies in charge of educational actions (requires multi-sectoral policies)
Responsibility of the state	Responsibility of the state and the whole society, thus demanding consensus-building and co-ordination of actions

Source: adapted from Torres 1999

Whether the expanded vision slipped out of focus because of the contradictions and tensions inherent in its negotiation, or because the practical business of programme implementation by donors and governments discouraged innovation, is unclear. Although the Forum Secretariat attempted to cover the expanded vision in its publications, the Forum constituents more generally,

including the Sponsors, allowed the expanded vision to slip from view as they set about *their* practical business of planning and implementing programmes on the ground. As a consequence the Forum's vision (as distinct from the Forum Secretariat's vision) became restricted.

3.5 MEMBERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP OF THE FORUM

What have been the criteria for membership of the Forum? To what extent has the Forum contributed to enhancing the spirit of partnership at international, regional and national levels? What main actors have not participated and why?

3.5.1 Membership

In principle, all countries, all development agencies supporting basic education, all organizations of civil society engaged in the delivery and support of basic education, and all private sector corporations so engaged are members of the Forum. Representatives of all of these constituencies have, in principle, been able to attend Jomtien and will be able to attend Dakar. The organisers of Paris, Delhi and Amman aimed to ensure that representatives of all constituencies and all countries attended at least one of these smaller meetings. The cost of organizing meetings, large and small, has posed a consistent constraint on invitations. The heads of the convening agencies invited members to attend Forum meetings. Together with the Forum Secretariat a roster of attendance of subsets of the full Forum was worked out.

Table 3

Membership Category and Meeting Attendance

Membership Category	*Paris*	*Delhi*	*Amman*
Developing countries	18 (20.7%)	13 (16.9%)	133 (59.1%)
Ministries/agencies providing development assistance	35 (40.2%)	26 (33.8%)	31 (13.8%)
UN agencies	20 (23.0%)	18 (23.4%)	42 (18.7%)
Non-governmental organizations	9 (10.3%)	20 (25.9%)	19 (8.4%)
Private sector and media	5 (5.8%)	-	-
Total	87 (100.0%)	77 (100.0%)	225 (100.0%)

Table 3 shows the different membership categories and the numbers in each category that attended Paris, Delhi and Amman. Resource persons, observers and members of the Secretariat attending those meetings are not included. There is a marked difference in the composition of the Paris and Delhi meetings on the one hand, and Amman on the other. Attendance at both the Paris and the Delhi meetings was biased towards development assistance agencies, both bilateral and multilateral. At Amman the bias shifted in favour of members of developing countries. NGOs achieved a better proportionate representation at the Delhi meeting than at Paris, but their representation at Amman fell below that achieved in Paris (Amman 8.4% of places; Paris 10.3%). The private sector and media categories were not represented in the Delhi and Amman meetings.

The Amman Forum was important in directing the work of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat. It included a data-gathering and reporting element and, with the exception of the NGO constituency, was more representative of the full Forum.

3.5.2 Representation

A recurring issue is the representative nature of Forum membership. Representativeness in this context has at least two meanings. The first is the 'representativeness' of organizations relative to their incidence in the population. Hence one may ask, as we did above in the comment on Table 1, whether 'developing countries' were under or over-represented at the Forum meetings relative to other membership categories, and whether they were more or less represented over time. The second is whether individuals who are nominated by their organizations to attend Forum meetings 'represent' these organizations, or whether they attend in a personal capacity. When individuals are invited to join the Forum Steering Committee do they join as representatives of their organizations and/or constituencies; or do they join in a personal capacity? Our discussions suggested considerable variations of understanding.

The former Executive Secretary of the Forum Secretariat introduces the notion of 'opting in':

> "Membership of the Forum has always been a rather vague concept, largely a matter of interested parties opting in, especially in respect to the Steering Committee. Particularly since Delhi, the door has been open to virtually any IGO and bilateral that showed any interest."

Those who commented on the lack of representation of national governments and NGOs on the Steering Committee expressed a different view. For them, membership depended on a prior invitation. 'Opt in' is not an option for those without financial resources.

Even among the convenor and bilateral agency members of the Steering Committee there were different views about representation. In addressing the questions posed by this study members of the convening agencies were more likely to respond in ways that reflected and represented respective organizations. Members of bilateral agencies were more likely to perceive their membership as *ad hominem* than as *ex officio*.

3.5.3 Partnership

Each Forum meeting contributed in different ways to enhancing the spirit of partnership. The Paris meeting set out the framework for the follow-up to Jomtien. The Delhi meeting led to the E-

9 initiative. The Amman meeting highlighted the need for more systematic efforts in the monitoring of progress towards EFA and redirected attention to issues of quality in basic education. The Amman meeting also led to a restructuring of the Steering Committee with an increase in the number of persons from NGOs and a number of 'personalities' from different regions in the South. Significantly, however, members of national government agencies were not, at any point in the decade, invited to join the Steering Committee. This omission was noted by many.

3.5.4 Partners Not Continuing to Participate at the Global Level

Some 'partners' who participated in the World Conference and/or the Paris meeting have not continued to participate at the Global level. These include one bilateral agency, the regional multilateral agencies and the business partners. Each requires some comment.

The bilateral agency was a Jomtien co-sponsor. Although neither evaluator spoke with anyone with knowledge of the circumstances at that agency at that time, others claim that the particular country was represented by two of its bilateral agencies at Jomtien. Following the World Conference it was decided that basic education issues properly belonged to the bilateral agency that has continued to participate. It would appear that shrinking financial resources, and not only 'territory', was a factor in the decision taken.

The terms of reference of regional multilateral agencies appear to restrict their participation at the global level. One regional multilateral agency reported that although it could no longer participate at the global level, it continued to be guided by the Framework for Action in terms of its loans and grants and has not changed its commitment to the objectives of EFA. When brought to their attention that the institution was not participating in the end-of-decade assessment and the planned regional meetings, the agency pleaded the small size of its staff in the education policy division and the demands on their time. A decision to participate would require some added incentive such as the promise of new, creative, even controversial, ideas on how to solve the perennial problems of basic education, had been missing. They were content to follow the activities through reports and other documents but not to invest in meetings.

Regional multilateral development agencies are generally supportive of EFA goals and target dimensions related to their regions. Further, over the decade of the 1990s they have given substantial support to countries for projects in basic education. Their non-participation is therefore not indicative of waning commitment to EFA goals. Their active participation in the EFA process, however, requires specific attention to the factors constraining their involvement as active partners.

The fall out of the business partners from the EFA process at the global level is a different matter from that of the bilateral agency and the multilateral regional agencies. Business partners were represented at Jomtien and at the Paris Forum. The records indicate that representatives from the 'elusive business community' were invited to serve on the Steering Committee. Time did not allow any follow up to find out why these partners have not continued. These reasons should be pursued further before new attempts are made to involve business partners in the EFA process.

3.5.5 Partnership at the Regional Level

What has been the role of the Forum in 'enhancing a spirit of partnership' at the regional level?

A considerable amount of EFA activity has taken place at the regional level. As noted above, each global Forum meeting was preceded by a range of regional and sub-regional consultations. The process of regional consultation which has been undertaken in the preparation of the Dakar Declaration and Framework for Action has been intense.

Each Forum global meeting has been held in a different region (Europe, Asia, Arab States, Africa). The Forum Secretariat has worked with the regional offices of UNESCO and UNICEF to disseminate its publications. The Forum has spawned three regional networks of journalists for EFA.

The Regional Technical Advisory Groups (RTAGs) have emerged as the most formalized form of partnership at the regional level. Most recently the RTAGS were set up as 'operational and dynamic centres' for a number of activities associated with the EFA 2000 Assessment. Arising from discussions among members of the Global Technical Advisory Group (GTAG), these RTAGs had specific terms of reference. These included the 'urgent mobilization and establishment of national EFA Assessment Groups (including technical sub-groups) and Inter-agency Working Groups as well as the nomination of National Assessment Co-ordinators); the organization of capacity-building and mobilization activities; co-ordination of technical support; monitoring of country assessment activities; preparation of regional synthesis reports; preparation and organization of regional EFA meetings and participation in regional resource mobilization activities. The RTAGs consisted mainly of members of UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank and UNFPA. Members of UN agencies bilateral donors, regional banks were also invited to join. In some regions the National Assessment Groups elected a team of regional representatives from among their number. These played important roles in the 1999/2000 regional meetings and in the consultations on the Dakar Declaration and Framework for Action.

The time frame in which the RTAGs worked was tight, and the rather comprehensive terms of reference, including fund raising, conference organization AND technical support posed some RTAGS with a quite considerable challenge. Nonetheless, most have agreed that the RTAG mechanism was vital to the apparent success of the exercise, which has been seen not only as a good technical exercise in monitoring, but also as an excellent exercise in EFA mobilization, capacity building and even EFA advocacy.

Some of the RTAGs have functioned more effectively than others. Where they have worked well, they have worked as inter-agency groups, with strong commitment to the Assessment and to EFA rather than to their respective 'agency turf', and with broad interests in all the countries of that region.... Where the RTAGs have worked less well, it appears that the consultative processes were not followed, there tended to be domination by one individual or group, and the perspective was more narrowly country-based.

Many National Assessment co-ordinators and also members of multi- and bilateral agencies see the continuation of some type of regional mechanism to be highly desirable.

3.5.6 Partnership at the Country Level

What has been the role of the Forum in 'enhancing a spirit of partnership' at the national level?

> *Whatever follow-up mechanism may, at the same time, be established at international level, it should serve national follow-up action and support it effectively. Follow-up action at the international level would seek to maintain the spirit of co-operation amongst countries, multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as NGOs, which has been the hallmark of the World Conference.*
>
> World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Final Report, Appendix 3

The Forum was mandated to 'serve' national follow-up action. National follow-up action was seen as the 'principal' follow-up 'task' (cf..Box 1). Some spoke of the Forum as located and operating only at an international level. For some

> "the Forum is the Convenors who are guiding/driving EFA."
>
> (Two EFA 2000 National Assessment Coordinators)

Some spoke of the Forum as 'reaching out to the regions and the countries', and cited the end-of-decade assessment as a good example of a set of actions initiated at the global level, and 'reaching out to' the regions and the National Ministries of Education. Others spoke of the Forum as something to which representatives from all the above constituencies 'came' (e.g. the international meetings).

> "The Forum is a big meeting to which we all have to report."
>
> (National EFA Assessment Coordinator).

Certainly the large meetings have presented important opportunities for the representatives of country agencies, in-country NGOs, regional organizations, international NGOs and agencies to meet, to present their work, to discuss and to network. They have provided a target for the completion of studies and reports. While the personal and professional significance of these meetings for the individuals who attend should not be underestimated, a question that remains is: what impact have these meetings had on EFA action?

Shortly after Jomtien, a number of multi- and bilateral agencies with country field offices played a very important role in the formation of EFA committees, supported donor or agency co-ordination groups, paid for country EFA studies and supported innovations on the ground. UNICEF and UNESCO field offices were very important in these actions. Strictly speaking, these initiatives did not emerge directly from the Forum Meetings, the Forum Steering Committee, or the Forum Secretariat. Rather they emerged from Forum constituents, the respective donor agency commitments to EFA, and were exercised through the other strands of EFA follow-up *viz.* 'more effective co-ordination by agencies (multilateral, bilateral and NGOs) at country-level' (cf. Box 1). In at least the case of UNDP, a decision was taken to decentralize EFA energies to assistance at the national level, and to adopt a low profile at the international level.

Undoubtedly these inputs were extremely important in the mobilization of EFA efforts in various countries. From the perspective of the global Forum, however, they may appear to have been

rather 'invisible' in a multi-levelled scheme of action. This point underlines the problem, noted in 1.4 above, of isolating the independent impact of the Forum on EFA from the impact of the other four strands of follow-up action.

In some countries however, real partnership appears to be compromised by 'turf wars' between the agencies, and by an inability or unwillingness of host governments to manage or mediate the partners. Although a number of country-level UN co-ordination mechanisms are available, such as the UN Development Assistance Forum (UNDAF), the Common Country Assessment (CCA), and the World Bank's new Comprehensive Development Framework (CCF), the ultimate responsibility for co-ordinating the EFA partners lies with respective host governments. At the same time the responsibility to manage partnerships poses some governments, (many pre-occupied with maintaining, rather than planning EFA systems in the face of major disasters and wars) with a major and unreasonable challenge.

The answer to this question of partnership at the country level and the more general question about the impact of the Forum on EFA action will surely vary from country to country. Countries with low literacy rates and low gross and net enrolment ratios, with strong states and willing development assistance partners may well have experienced an enduring and strong sense of involvement in and support from the Forum. Countries with higher literacy rates may have experienced a lower sense of involvement, even though they had the potential to contribute significantly to the EFA knowledge-base.

3.5.7 EFA and the Forum in Sri Lanka

Although country comparisons fell beyond the scope of our terms of reference, one of us was able to examine this question in the context of Sri Lanka, a country which, already by the beginning of the decade, had achieved well on conventional EFA indicators.

Thirteen persons met to discuss the EFA experience in Sri Lanka over the past decade. Invitees to the meeting included all those who had participated in Jomtien, Paris, Delhi and Amman, senior persons involved in the current assessment exercise, the Secretary General of the UNESCO National Commission and members of UNICEF Colombo. The discussion focussed on the significance of Jomtien, the awareness and visibility of the EFA Forum, the experience of the EFA 2000 Assessment, and ways forward. Box 3 summarizes points raised during the discussion.

The messages are mixed. The expanded Jomtien vision was perceived to contain important messages even for a country that already had achieved well on conventional EFA indicators. Yet, despite this historical achievement, the country had not considered it to be appropriate to share with others at Jomtien an understanding of some of the conditions that had led to it.

The Forum had and has low visibility in Sri Lanka. Although an EFA committee was established after Jomtien in the Ministry, it had a low priority within the Ministry's programme of work. It was seen as something separate from both the general work of the Ministry and the World Bank's General Education Project, despite the fact that the objectives of the latter were consistent with many of the EFA goals.

The 'request' from the Sri Lanka UNICEF office and the UNESCO National Commission to undertake the end-of-decade assessment spurred the Ministry into action. The assessment work and deadlines for submission of country reports and conference attendance created a sense of new

momentum. Considerable capacity was built up and an effective partnership established between UNICEF and the Ministry.

Actions and strategies for education whose goals coincided with those of EFA during the decade were numerous, but seem to have occurred in spite of the Forum.

Despite its lack of visibility in Sri Lanka, the forthcoming Forum meeting in Dakar was viewed as a means to insist that 'countries' set interim and final targets and develop action plans to meet them. Importantly, monitoring was seen to be integral to those plans, and not separated from them.

Box 3
EFA and the Forum in Sri Lanka

Jomtien was important for its focus on those out-of-school and illiterate adults, as well as those in school; and for the way it focussed on learning achievement as well as enrolment. Jomtien seemed a little irrelevant to the Sri Lankan context, given our very high performance in education. Jomtien was also embarrassing in as much as it was James Grant, not we, who emphasized our traditional Buddhist learning systems. The global concern for education expressed at Jomtien was a good thing – but who was going to follow it up? A declaration is not binding. There were no clear targets and no funding. Countries were expected to set targets but we did not do it. There was non-accountability. UNESCO used to have a lot of clout but this had diminished in recent years. So who was going to push EFA?

The EFA *Forum* is not visible in Sri Lanka. After Jomtien an EFA committee was set up in the Ministry but then the responsible officer began work on a World Bank project and the EFA work became a low priority. No one could find any documents in the Ministry to help in the preparation for Amman. There was no functioning EFA committee in the Ministry at that time. The initial momentum was lost. EFA has become important in the Ministry recently because of the EFA 2000 Assessment.

EFA action. A number of very important EFA actions have happened in Sri Lanka in the last decade, in spite of the Forum. We have introduced legislation on compulsory education and this has been important for influencing resource allocation. We have established the National Education Commission and launched our country-wide education reform. We are doing much work on the Convention of the Rights of the Child with UNICEF. We have also established a separate budget head for primary education at the national and provincial level.

EFA 2000 Assessment. Independently the Secretary General of the UNESCO National Commission and UNICEF approached the Ministry about the EFA assessment. The Secretary General said 'My Commission has no capacity to take on these activities...fortunately, UNICEF's statistician was able to work very closely with the Ministry team'. The assessment has been a difficult task for all parties. The 18 indicators did not match available data very closely. We had to try very hard to create the baseline indicators, nine years after they should have been created. We have also redesigned the Annual School Census form to enable us to generate some of the indicators more easily in the future. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is currently working on a five year country plan for primary education and is using the EFA indicators in their monitoring system to integrate better the internal and external agenda. The assessment team has worked incredibly hard and much capacity has been built up in the process of doing the assessment. Though hard, the experience of doing the assessment has forged very strong ties between the Ministry and UNICEF.

Ways forward. At Dakar it will be important to insist that countries set interim and final targets. We must also have a plan and strategies to reach them. Monitoring derives from plans. Monitoring systems, however 'super', will not in themselves bring about that learning achievement. There is no option but to have a good plan of action to take children through the learning. When we return from Dakar we should hold a national workshop to share with others the outcomes of Dakar. We should hold a national EFA convention every two years to keep up the momentum. We should also encourage the SAARC Education Committee to establish an EFA secretariat to encourage EFA activity in the region. And maybe Sri Lanka could host a secretariat on MLA. We have renamed MLA as ELL, or Essential Levels of Learning. We should encourage Ministries to incorporate EFA reports into National Plans, not the other way around. Because we have decentralized the responsibility for education to the provinces we must involve the provinces in this monitoring exercise. We must make our findings well known across the country. We must make our reports reader-friendly. We must continue to build capacity. We must also recognise that different countries should include indicators which may be more specific to their context. For example in Sri Lanka we should include more indicators on the quality of education and learning. But we must not wait until 2010 to do so!

Notes on meeting convened in Colombo, November 1999, by the Ministry of Education to discuss EFA and the Forum.

3.6 BILATERAL AGENCIES AND NGOS

What has been the role of bilateral and civil society organizations?

It is difficult to speak of *the* role of bilateral agencies and NGOs in the abstract. Roles have emerged as the Forum coalition as evolved.

3.6.1 Bilateral Agencies

In the lead up to the World Conference in Jomtien bilateral agencies were invited to serve as 'co-sponsors' or 'associate sponsors', defined in terms of size of financial contribution to the mounting of the World Conference (cf. Section 2). Co-sponsors qualified by contributing half the amount contributed by Sponsors. Six countries with bilateral programmes gave contributions that qualified them as co-sponsors. Associate sponsors contributed approximately 20 per cent of the amount specified for Sponsors. Three countries with bilateral programmes gave contributions that qualified them as associate sponsors.

The majority of bilateral agencies that were co- or associate sponsors have continued to contribute to the Forum and to EFA. Their members have been members of the Steering Committee. Some also serve on the Management Committee. Over the course of the decade, and as we saw earlier in Table 1, several bilateral agencies have given substantial financial support to the Forum that has been at a higher level than at least three of the Convenors. Indeed, at the end of the decade the total contribution of bilateral agencies to the Forum far exceeds that of the total contribution of the five Convenors.

It was clear that the term 'Sponsor' as used at Jomtien, implied a financial contribution. Subsequently, the terms 'partnership' and 'partners' came to be used in the context of the EFA effort as a whole, and also in relation to Forum membership. But the financial implications of being a bilateral 'partner member' of the Forum remain unclear.

In the years immediately following the establishment of the Forum in 1991 bilateral agencies played a very significant and important role in the work of the Forum by filling the gaps in financial support in circumstances where contributions from the Sponsors were insufficient to fund the activities of the Forum. Some persons are of the view that the bilateral agencies rescued the Forum from financial collapse in its early years. Recognition of the rising importance of bilateral agencies in the work of the Forum is probably best symbolized by the fact that when the Steering Committee was restructured in 1996 to include an on-going chairmanship it was a representative from among the bilateral agencies that was elected Chairman.

Several among the Forum's bilateral agency members expressed strong views on two matters. First, although some bilateral agencies currently contribute more than some Convenors to the financial viability of the work of the Forum, they perceive that their voices are not heeded by the Secretariat to the same extent as those of the Convenors. This does not relate to the expression of views within the mechanisms of the Forum but rather to the role that Convenors play outside of these mechanisms. Second, several bilateral agencies are of the view that their full potential is not being harnessed in the work of the Forum. Some bilateral agencies have supported substantial

programmes in basic education, and in education generally, that should be taken account of in the work of the Forum.

It is important to note the following:

- The contribution of the bilateral agencies to the Forum's global account has been critical. Without it the Forum may well have disintegrated.

- Bilateral agencies within the Forum are not a monolithic group. In terms of financial contributions some have made very substantial contributions at the global level; others less.

- Some bilateral agencies share some of the strictures of some Convenors in the extent to which they can contribute directly to the work of the Forum.

- Bilateral agencies with large basic education programmes worldwide may not overlap with those making substantial contributions directly to the Forum.

- All bilateral agencies work within the framework of the foreign policy of their governments that may not be as comprehensive in scope as the development agenda of the UN.

- The original statement of follow-up to Jomtien (cf. Box 1) included a commitment by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank to meet annually to co-ordinate their own activities in the educational field. This was in the context of having 'agreed to increase support to basic education within each of their own planning frameworks, structures and resources allocation mechanisms'. The Forum was conceived as but one of five follow-up mechanisms (cf. Section 2.1.3). The Convenors were mandated to meet outside the Forum mechanism. This may explain the 'second voice'.

- In providing developmental assistance in education since 1990, most bilateral agencies have taken their cue from the World Declaration and Framework for Action in developing policies in support of basic education. Apart from participating in the Forum, bilateral agencies are making an important contribution to the achievement of EFA by virtue of the development assistance given to countries. As such, whether or not they contribute financially to the work of the Forum, they constitute a critical resource in the overall coalition of partners working for EFA.

3.6.2 Non-Governmental Organizations

The statement on the follow-up to WCEFA indicated that, as a consequence of the momentum generated by the World Conference, it was expected that national representatives, multilateral and bilateral agencies *and NGOs* would wish to be part of a consultative forum that would aim at promoting the EFA goals.

NGOs played a significant role in WCEFA. They have always been a part of the Forum and have been represented in the Steering and Management Committees. Their original role was perceived

to be that of an interest group ensuring that the views of NGOs in some collective sense were aired and heard. The size of their representation was increased in 1996 when the Steering Committee was expanded.

In the Forum's early years there were two NGO representatives on the Steering Committee: the Bernard van Leer Foundation, which had been an associate sponsor of Jomtien and the other, a coalition of international NGOs committed to EFA. Since the restructuring of the Steering Committee in 1996, additional NGOs have been co-opted to give better geographical balance. The criteria used to select them are not entirely clear. Selections were made after consultations between the Forum Secretariat and the Convenors.

More recent developments seem to signal the possibility of the emergence of a new role for NGOs in the future. Oxfam joined the Steering Committee and put forward its Global Action Plan, (GAP) which is predicated on the assumption that without new and additional resources of sizeable magnitude, countries will not be able to achieve EFA. The main elements of the GAP proposal include the following:

- Massive and aggressive fund-raising efforts globally to create a fund that would expand the resources available for support of EFA activities in developing countries.

- Multilateral and bilateral agency contributions to the fund to boost the contributions from business and civil society.

- The creation of regional implementation mechanisms available to assist countries with planning and development of projects and programmes to achieve EFA.

- Strict criteria and close monitoring to be applied to countries seeking and obtaining assistance from the resources of the fund.

- Firm target dates to be set for the achievement of EFA goals.

The intention here is neither to assess the merits or demerits of the GAP proposal nor to comment on the extensive debate on it that has taken place within the Steering Committee and within some agencies. Whether or not the GAP proposal is accepted by the Steering Committee or any or all agencies, Oxfam can, and probably will, proceed with it.

The point here is that the GAP proposal signals the possible emergence of a new role for NGOs as that of major providers of funds for EFA activities in the field. This also holds out new possibilities for the voice of NGOs in the Forum. It also raises questions about the goals of the Forum itself. Funding has not been part of the Forum's terms of reference hitherto. Whether it should be is a matter for future discussion and decision. What is not in question is that the GAP proposal and the voice of Oxfam in the Steering Committee has reopened the discussion of the role and work of the Forum, and has led to the greatest divergence of views among Steering Committee members since its inception.

3.7 THE ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

What has been the role of the Steering Committee?

3.7.1 The Steering Committee as a Mini Forum

Of all the Forum mechanisms, the Steering Committee has undergone the greatest change over the decade. As its name implies the Steering Committee was established to give guidance to the Forum Secretariat. In its first five years, the Steering Committee was largely a creature of the agencies funding the Forum. Its membership was drawn predominantly from agencies, with one representative each from four regions of the world and one representative of a non-governmental organization closely linked to a multinational corporation. Over the last five years the Steering Committee has evolved into what some have termed a 'Mini Forum', comprised of representatives from multilateral and bilateral agencies, regions, and organizations of civil society. The turning point in changing structure and some functions of the Steering Committee was the mid-decade review and Amman Meeting.

At its inception the Steering Committee comprised representatives of the five sponsoring UN multilateral agencies, some bilateral development agencies and one representative for each of four so-called developing regions of the world. The agencies appointed their representatives while there was consultation among the sponsoring agencies and the Secretariat in the selection of the regional representatives. While there was consistency in the regional representatives from one meeting to the next, there was not always the same consistency in the representatives appointed by the agencies to attend meetings. The chairmanship rotated at each meeting among representatives from the Convenors. The committee met twice per year.

The rotation of the chairmanship and the inconsistent attendance of the agency members resulted in substantial variations in the leadership and composition of the Steering Committee from one meeting to the next. This posed considerable problems for the Secretariat. On several occasions, decisions taken or guidance given at one meeting was reversed or substantially modified at the next, sometimes in circumstances where the Secretariat had already begun implementation.

Following the New Delhi meeting of the Forum in 1993, even more bilateral agencies were invited to participate in the Steering Committee. This open door policy worked well in attracting more members to Committee meetings, but it became increasingly difficult to obtain clear decisions, or even clear guidance, from a group of 30 or more.

3.7.2 Learning from Amman

What has been learned from the mid-term review? To what extent have these lessons been applied in practice?

At mid-decade and leading up to the Amman meeting, the Steering Committee informally reviewed itself and its operations. Following Amman, and taking heed of some of the lessons

learned from it, a major restructuring of the Steering Committee was implemented. The elements of this restructuring can be summarised as follows:

- An on-going chairman and alternate chairman were appointed. The former was to come from among the development agencies and the latter from among the regional representatives.

- A Management Committee was appointed. The Management Committee was a subset of the Steering Committee. It comprised the development agencies directly contributing financially to the work of the Forum, four regional representatives and a representative from an organization of the civil society. The role of the Management Committee was to give specific guidance to the Secretariat with respect to implementation of decisions taken by the Steering Committee and to arrange for the funding of the particular activities. The Management Committee dealt only with matters referred to it by the Steering Committee. It could not generate its own agenda.

- Regional representation on the Steering Committee was expanded to include one 'personality' from each of eleven functioning sub-regions of the world. Regional personalities were invited by the Secretariat to serve, following consultation with the five Convenors. These regional personalities elected their four representatives on the Management Committee.

- Representation of civil society organizations was increased, although no fixed number was placed on this category of membership, which in some cases overlapped with regional representation.

- The agenda of the Steering Committee was extended to include matters of EFA content. Experts would be invited to make presentations to the Steering Committee on issues and innovations related to specific areas of EFA.

3.7.3 Stability

Since the restructuring of 1996, both the chairmanship and membership of the Steering Committee have stabilised. Greater stability in leadership and consistency in attendance at meetings have significantly improved the group dynamics of the Steering Committee. Members have come to know and trust each other better, and to understand the issues more thoroughly. Members have become very involved and active. Further, the separation of the discussion of 'issues' and matters of administration and finance has led to better quality discussions within the Steering Committee.

3.7.4 Quality of Guidance given to the Secretariat

To what extent has the Steering Committee provided guidance and resources to the Secretariat in discharging its duties?

The restructuring has led to more consistent and better quality guidance from the Steering Committee and its Management sub-committee, to the Secretariat. The restructuring has been associated with improved financing for Forum activities. In the last four years the Secretariat has not been constrained by funding to the same degree as it was in its first five years. It is not possible to determine the extent to which this improved financial situation can be attributed to the restructuring, or to additional bilateral agencies joining the Steering Committee and qualifying for membership on the Management Committee by virtue of their direct contribution to the work of the Forum. In addition, the end-of-decade assessment has contributed focus and attracted funding support, in one form or another, from almost all of the agencies represented in the Steering Committee.

3.7 5 Disagreement and its Handling

Despite the significant changes and improvements in the structure and functioning of the Steering Committee it would be inaccurate to say that there are no substantial issues in the relationship between it and the Secretariat. At times there have been real disagreements between some members of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat concerning decisions which the former believe have been made by them and which require action by the Secretariat. Some members believe that some agencies are 'tweaking the strings' of the Secretariat in order to influence versions of the decision to which they are most favourably inclined. At the root of this tension is the second voice, or vote, that sponsoring agencies (all, or individually) have in the operations of the Forum outside of its formal mechanisms. This leads some members from the bilateral agencies and the regions to feel that their voices have not been heard in giving guidance to the Secretariat, even where they had managed to convince the majority of the Steering Committee to share their perspective. There is also a structural difficulty here. On the one hand, the Secretariat is 'guided' by the Steering Committee. On the other hand, Secretariat members are 'employed and paid' and presumably managed and appraised by the host organization.

The fundamental issue to be addressed in the relationship between the Steering Committee and the Secretariat is the 'arena' nature of the Forum. There are very few issues on which there is almost total consensus. At the same time, individuals serve on the Steering Committee in their personal capacity with no obligations binding the bodies from which they come. This makes voting on issues an almost superfluous exercise. Hence no such system is used to settle issues. These circumstances leave some important issues unresolved. It would appear that the 'second' voice of the Convenors is sometimes used by the Secretariat to determine direction where there is no clear and definitive agreement on a matter, but where there is a need to act.

A case in point is the still-to-be-resolved issue about the nature of the advocacy messages that should be promoted by the Secretariat in the lead up to Dakar. Proposals from the Secretariat were put to the Steering Committee. Lack of time prevented their discussion by the Steering Committee. The matter was therefore referred to the Management Committee where important differences emerged. Should the content highlight accomplishments and achievements, or shortfalls and deficits? Views were expressed on both sides. A third position, insisting that messages should reflect a balance that comes close to the reality, emerged. Should the Secretariat highlight progress, and appear self-congratulatory; highlight shortfalls and deficits and assist the mobilization efforts of a particular partner; or represent the more rounded view of reality on the ground? Voices were expressed on all sides from the Secretariat and from the Management Committee. It is not clear what decision emerged to guide the work of the Secretariat. Only a *post hoc* analysis of what was actually done will reveal which voices were heeded.

At the end of decade, the Steering Committee is now in a much stronger position to guide the work of the Secretariat than it was at the beginning. The mere fact that there are disagreements between members of the Steering Committee, and between them and the Secretariat, indicates an engagement in the meetings and the work. Partnership is not always a smooth relationship. If there were no disagreement or debate the notion of a 'Forum' would itself need to be called into question.

3.7.6 The Content of the Steering Committee Agenda

There remains a question over the balance of 'what' is discussed at the Steering Committee meetings. One member recalled occasions when one or two speakers were invited to contribute ideas about adult education, early childhood education, and inclusive education. These inputs had the potential to raise the nature of the discussions to a more academic level, and to enable Steering Committee members to rethink the big picture of EFA, of learning, of ways of learning, of target groups etc. This member felt that the Steering Committee – the mini forum – should be addressing the fundamental questions of learning and EFA as well as the issues on which the Secretariat could subsequently act. This reminds us of the Paris 1991 statement on the role of the Forum.

> "The Forum can provide general guidance to the international community by identifying successful and promising new approaches."

One might question whether the identification of promising new approaches is one of the proper roles of the Steering Committee meetings, and whether, if not, it has been addressed sufficiently in the larger meetings? One might also question whether the 'Steering' Committee is or should see itself as steering the work of the Forum as well as that of the Forum's Secretariat? Or whether the Steering Committee has become, *de facto*, the Forum, and is therefore self-steering? In a frank assessment of the Steering Committee and its role *vis-a-vis* both the Secretariat and the larger meetings, one member of the Steering Committee commented:

> "The Steering Committee is clearly too large and heterogeneous to really steer and decide. It has been more of a discussion forum and sounding board for the secretariat's suggestions. But it also has the important symbolic function of representing the diversity and unity of the EFA movement, and as such has been indispensable. Right after Amman 1996, we established the smaller Management Committee, and it may be said that the Steering Committee has *de facto* become the Forum itself. Otherwise, the fiction has been that the 'Forum' was constituted by that assembly of some 500 people who met every two or three years for the so-called 'Forum Meetings', in Paris, Delhi, Amman, and now Dakar. *I consider that fiction no longer helpful.*"

The same general trend is noticeable with respect to resources. While the Steering Committee gives general guidance with respect to what should be done, it is the Management Committee that assumes responsibility for identifying the resources needed and potential sources of contribution. This approach has worked fairly well over the last five years. While the Secretariat is not awash with funds, it has been provided with the resources that it has projected it needs to implement the Forum's activities at the end of the decade. While there are still issues to be addressed, and improvements to be made, it is not unfair to conclude that the Steering Committee has been satisfactorily performing most of the responsibilities assigned to it.

3. 8 MAIN PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT

What have been the main problems and limitations of the Secretariat?

We identified six main problems and limitations:

The volume of staffing and volume of work. Since its inception, the Secretariat has been very modestly staffed, with four persons including a secretary. Within the last four years the staff has been increased to six persons including secretaries. To relieve some of the work pressure, UNESCO provided additional staff support from Units involved in the broader EFA project. Such support, however, is conditional on the availability of the staff in those Units at that time. While this arrangement mitigates some of the understaffing problem, it underscores the 'fact' of understaffing of the Secretariat relative to its EFA responsibilities.

The vagueness of its structures and status. The Forum is a difficult animal to describe. It has neither statutes nor legal identity, and for its first eight years, it had no real by-laws spelling out its mandate, the composition and powers of its Steering Committee, and the relationship of that Committee with the Secretariat. Yet it functioned reasonably well. The Forum is sometimes referred to as an inter-agency mechanism, but some of its constituents are not agencies, and those that are constitute a mix of inter-governmental and bilateral agencies and programmes. The Forum has no clear definition of its 'members'. Several organizations regularly participate in its global meetings and in its Steering Committee. But, are the other invitees to its global meetings, especially those 'representing' the developing regions, 'members' of the Forum? This vagueness has not been a major handicap for the Secretariat, and at times has probably been an asset, but it occasionally causes some difficulties, particularly with bureaucrats within UNESCO, which hosts the Forum's Secretariat. It also appears to pose a problem for certain other agencies that cannot transfer funds to a multilateral agency such as UNESCO, which administers a special account on behalf of the Forum.

Circumventing UNESCO's bureaucratic requirements and processes. While a number of special arrangements have been made by UNESCO to accommodate the Secretariat and the work of the Forum, thereby giving the Secretariat a semi-autonomous status, there are several aspects of the work of the Secretariat that must conform to UNESCO bureaucratic requirements. Frustrations include delays in relation to the payment of consultants, the translation and printing of documents, advance payments for meetings or such other logistical but important matters. Logistical issues consume too much of the time of Secretariat staff, distracting them from actions needed on more substantive issues.

Coping with competing and sometimes hidden agendas of partners. The EFA project and the Forum are predicated on ambitious and idealistic notions of collaboration, and co-ordinated actions centred on the common cause of basic education for all and basic learning needs. However, as the Forum is an arena in which different intentions and agendas compete, the Secretariat is frequently caught in the confluence and crosscurrents of this competition. While the Forum accommodates diverse agendas in mobilizing national, regional and global support for the common cause, members of the Secretariat feel that they have to cope with understanding the different reasons for partners' apparent agreement. The different reasons for agreement usually become apparent when action is to be taken. The options open to the Secretariat are (i) to become confused and therefore immobilised, (ii) to act on its own best judgement risking censure from

some partners and/or members of the Steering Committee, or (iii) to side with some partners instead of others. In this regard, some members from the convening agencies have provided an important crutch for the Secretariat.

Staying neutral in inter-agency disagreements and rivalry. While the Forum is predicated on the notion of inter-agency collaboration it is not immune from the reality and negative impact of inter-agency disagreements and rivalry for credit and kudos. At the same time, because the Secretariat is located in UNESCO and staffed mainly by persons employed by UNESCO, it has been difficult for the Secretariat to avoid the perception in being partial towards UNESCO in circumstances in which there are inter-agency disagreements and rivalry. While there are many advantages for the Secretariat's location in UNESCO, this is one of its limitations.

Reliance on multilateral partners for execution of EFA activities in the regions and countries. By design the Secretariat in and of itself has no regional and country reach. It has to rely on multilateral agencies with field offices in countries and regions. While such agencies have been of immense assistance to the Forum in mounting EFA activities, the extent and quality of the assistance vary from region to region and country to country

Several of the issues raised above could be addressed in any restructuring or measures to improve the work of the Secretariat. However, some are intrinsic to the nature of the broader EFA coalition and literally 'come with the territory'. While their effects can be mitigated, they cannot be eliminated. For example, collaboration and co-ordination among autonomous bodies is by no means easy. There is a price to be paid in the time and effort required to examine issues in detail, to identify differences and to work out compromises. Collaboration and co-ordination also require an investment in social capital with medium and long-term returns of 'trust' between the individuals involved.

The problems encountered by the Secretariat must be considered against the background of the areas of satisfaction experienced by its members. Several members of the Secretariat have reported the following feelings about their work:

- A sense of being a part of an important movement in the history of civilization.
- Being inspired by what has been achieved in several countries working with very limited resources.
- Pride in participating in specific activities that have produced useful and important documents, advanced inter-agency collaboration or provided critical information to partners.
- Enjoying the work involved and being excited by the prospects.
- Enjoying work in a semi-autonomous entity with some freedom to initiate and innovate.
- Enjoying working and interacting with professionals and practitioners from all over the world.

SECTION 4

OPTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Are there better ways of carrying out the activities of the Forum? What options are there for international co-ordination structures in future?

4.1 THE WAY FORWARD

In his book *Conceptual Activity,* A.N. Whitehead maintained that if you want to know where any system of electrons would be in the future you needed to know two things. First, where that system is coming from, its past history, and second, the dynamic forces at work upon the system at the present time. With knowledge of these two vectors it should be possible to project its future course.

The future of the Forum, its very existence even, will depend on what is debated face-to-face in the regions and in Dakar, and virtually in the run-up to Dakar. Those deliberations constitute the dynamic forces that are at work in the Forum at the current time. Without the benefit of the hindsight of these decisions, it is difficult for the evaluators to project the Forum of the future.

In answering the above questions, therefore, we view the assessment of the Forum's work over the past decade as but *one* of the inputs that will fashion the future of the Forum.

Our approach to the way forward, therefore, is not to anticipate the decisions of the regional meetings, those of the multilateral and bilateral agencies or the organizations of civil society, but rather to identify options arising from the assessment.

4.2 WHAT THE FORUM HAS BEEN

Three characteristics lead us to the conclusion that the Forum has been a unique arrangement in global collaboration. These are its:

- Focus on and mandate for basic education for infants, children, youths and adults.
- Global vision and scope.
- Inclusiveness, reflected in the diverse organizations, countries, agencies and personalities that populate its space.

The Forum was not modelled on any pre-existing arrangement but has become a model for inclusive global dialogue and collaboration. The design of the Forum was appropriate to its primary mission to keep the process of EFA alive and to prevent it from being an event that occurred at Jomtien, Thailand between 5 and 9 March 1990. Our judgement is that the Forum has performed its primary mission, if even in a modest manner. The process of EFA remains alive at the end of the decade of the 1990s. The search for other forms and arrangements therefore is only

justified if a different mandate and other purposes and functions are prescribed to follow up the Dakar Conference.

The Forum, as it has operated over the last decade, can be characterized as follows:

- A loosely organized coalition of interests each inspired, motivated and driven by specific situational imperatives for achieving education for all.

- A symbol representing the continuing presence of a commitment to EFA, but to which very contradictory expectations and unrealistic hopes have been attached.

- A voluntary association of agencies, organizations, countries and institutions held together by the shared vision of EFA but divergent in their views and actions with respect to how EFA can and should be achieved.

- An arena, constantly shifting in composition of stakeholders and action, in which ideas, information and best practices have been shared, some actions have been synchronised among those present at the time they were discussed and agreed, and in which ideas have been contended and actions contested.

- An entity without legal statutes or constitution, authority, powers or resources of its own but which has still managed to operate and to comply modestly with its mission.

- An expanding network of countries, agencies, organizations of civil society, institutions and personalities with a vaguely defined hub in the form of the Steering Committee.

When these features are considered together, the Forum is difficult to define in terms of conventional forms and organizations. This difficulty is heightened by the fact that the Forum has succeeded in *not* becoming another international bureaucratic organization. By not becoming another agency or organization, the Forum has been faithful to a parameter, specified in the Framework for Action, that the follow-up arrangements should work within existing institutions and organizations. It has also avoided the pitfall of becoming a donor agencies club, although for a time it went dangerously close to edges of that pit.

From very different perspectives we have come jointly to the view that the Forum at best is a global arena in which there is exchange, sharing, collaboration, contestation and contention of EFA ideas, actions, means and modes.

4.3 UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Throughout the decade of the 1990s the Forum operated in spite of several unresolved issues. The way forward requires resolution of at least some of these. The most critical relate to its functions, authority, membership and funding. Each requires some comment.

4.3.1 Functions

Any discussion of optional mechanisms of international co-ordination in the future must flow from consensus about function. While the role of the Forum as a consultative arena has been generally agreed, there has been less consensus over some of its other functions. For example, the Forum has been expected to co-ordinate implementation of EFA in the absence of any authority with respect to any of its members. It has been expected to advocate without any specification of the target audience. It has been expected to provide intellectual leadership without itself having its own store of knowledge on EFA. The Forum has been required to monitor without any data-gathering capacity and no direct and established institutional links to the countries. It has been expected by some to be pro-active in the mobilization of resources for EFA in the absence of any mandate to do so.

It is critical that the structure given to the Forum, or its successor, should be fashioned in relation to functions assigned to it.

It is also critical that those who fashion change in the Forum's functions achieve consensus over the Forum's function *in relation to other follow-up mechanisms, if any*. In Section 2.1.4 we explained how, at Jomtien, the Forum was seen as just *one* of five inter-linked mechanisms of follow-up. Though inter-linked, the five were perceived as separate, *exclusive* even, strands of activity. This study has suggested that some members of the Steering Committee perceive the Forum as a much more *inclusive* mechanism, embracing the other four. Some members were unaware that the Main Sponsors were mandated at Jomtien to meet separately and annually to co-ordinate activities, or that the agencies had been separately mandated at Jomtien to co-ordinate more effectively at the country level. The apparent 'second voice' of the Main Sponsors was seen by some as a criticism of the way the Forum was operating. The ineffective co-ordination by agencies in some countries was perceived by some to be a failing of the Forum. And the absence of a needs assessment at the 'country' level and identification of resource requirements in some countries was again placed at the door of the Forum. Yet for others, these lapses could not be seen as criticisms, simply because the responsibilities for them lay elsewhere. The Forum was one of five parallel follow-up mechanisms.

The perceived relationship between the Forum and other forms of follow-up to Dakar – i.e. whether the Forum is *inclusive* or *exclusive* of the others - will influence decisions about functions. The Forum that acts as a 'consultative arena' for all strands of follow-up will have many more functions than a Forum that stands free of, or is subordinated to, other strands. The perceived relationship will also influence how one thinks about the levels - sub-national, national, regional, international and global - at which functions/actions are to be led, initiated, advocated, planned, implemented, resourced, managed, monitored, and by whom. Without the benefit of the decisions that will be taken at Dakar it is virtually impossible for us to be prescriptive on this matter except to say the obvious, that final responsibility for the implementation of EFA rests with countries which must play a more prominent role in future EFA follow-up mechanisms.

4.3.2 Authority

There have been some voices, anxious to see the realization of EFA, which have argued that the Forum should acquire some authority and responsibility for achieving EFA. This would be exercised through making available to countries financial resources tied to various conditions,

thought to be essential to the achievement of EFA. From this perspective, the achievement of EFA globally, within any reasonable time frame, requires a hard edge delivered through compliance with conditions tied to access to additional resources. This view has been challenged both by countries and agencies, probably for different reasons. Several voices from countries have been adamant that not only does responsibility for EFA rest primarily with countries, but it would be highly undesirable for EFA to become the province of international agencies or organizations of civil society. Understood in its most elemental form, basic education is about the mobilization of people to some future end. That international agencies could acquire the power to directly mobilize national populations with scant regard for national authority is anathema to most countries. In this debate, some agencies that have often employed the hard edge in their relations with countries have argued for the soft touch that recognizes the roles and rights of national authorities. Interestingly, this issue lies at the root of most hotly contested debate in the Steering Committee.

4.3.3 Membership

Membership of the large Forum meetings has been clear-cut. All countries and agencies, NGOs and institutions supporting EFA are, in principle, members of the Forum. Membership of the Steering Committee and the Mini Forums that are held periodically has been a different matter. Agencies virtually have open-door access to the Steering Committee while countries and organizations of civil society have been much more restricted in access. Members who are in a position to commit their agency or organization often violate informality of membership, predicated in terms of personal capacity. Duration of office and membership are also without guidelines or bylaws.

The issue of membership of the different elements/bodies of the Forum will need to be re-addressed once consensus over the functions of each has been reached. Membership of different elements of the Forum should be related to functional competence. If the function of a Forum body is resource mobilization, the respective body (or working group) must include persons/institutions capable of mobilizing resources. If the function is advocacy, the respective body must include people knowledgeable about how to advocate and also people who know what to advocate. If the function is intellectual leadership, then the respective body must include EFA-knowledgeable people, skilled in knowledge synthesis and creation. If the function is co-ordination, then the respective body must include people who are skilled in co-ordination.

4.3.4 Funding

Guaranteed funding commitments are essential to the future of any Forum. Notwithstanding the commitments made at Jomtien by the heads of the convening agencies, much of the Forum's work has been constrained by the different financial regulations of agencies. Whether at Dakar or shortly thereafter, financial commitments to the funding of the Forum need to be made and followed up by agencies with the potential to contribute. This may include multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs, foundations and national governments. It is highly desirable that the Forum has an annual budget with assured sources of financing. Membership or sponsorship categories could be tailored to funding expectations. ADEA provides a useful model in this respect.

4.4 NEW DEVELOPMENTS

There are at least two new developments that must be taken on board in any future planning for the Forum. These are the establishment of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the revolutionary changes that have taken place in information and communications technology over the past ten years.

4.4.1 The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

The establishment of the UIS makes it possible for the Forum to establish strong collaborative and co-operative arrangements with it with respect to the function of monitoring progress towards the achievement of EFA. While the EFA Forum, or any mechanism that replaces it, should retain responsibility for monitoring progress towards the achievement of EFA goals, close and strong collaborative arrangements should be maintained with UIS. Areas of collaboration and co-operation should include data gathering, data analysis and interpretation of trends and patterns, capacity building at the regional and country levels on an on-going basis as well as the expansion of indicators beyond the 18 used in the end-of-decade assessment. In addition to maintaining databases that allow for international comparisons at the national level, the UIS should be encouraged to maintain disaggregated data at the country level that would be useful to countries in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the provision of and participation in basic education. The Forum, or its successor, would then be assured of high quality data that could be used for policy advice to countries, advocacy as well as pointers for research and in-depth investigations.

While the UIS is an obvious collaborator, there are other potential sources of support for this function, including partnerships between Institutes/Universities in the South and the North and national governments. Whatever form of partnership is chosen, the general point is that the Forum must work with partners with technical expertise in specific areas.

4.4.2 Information and Communications Technology

The developments in information and communications technology over the last decade add a virtual element to the Forum that opens up vistas unimagined at Jomtien. The resources of the Internet, the potential of Intranets within regions and countries, the possibilities of synchronous and asynchronous on-line conferences, list-serves, educational management information systems, and other applications open the possibility of linkages within countries, within regions and globally that reach down to schools, teachers and students. The potential of applying information and communications technology to EFA follow-up in the future should be carefully but aggressively pursued.

4.5 OPTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

In the course of conducting the evaluation, numerous suggestions were made with respect to the way forward. We have classified these suggestions into six broad options. Each will be discussed in turn.

4.5.1 Discontinue the Forum and Disband the Steering Committee and Secretariat

This option discontinues the Forum and disbands the Steering Committee and Secretariat following the World Conference in Dakar in April 2000. The argument in favour of this option is: the World Declaration and Framework for Action set 2000 as the target date for the accomplishment of EFA. The Forum, Steering Committee and Secretariat were temporary mechanisms. Although the goals of EFA are not fully accomplished, countries, organizations of the civil society, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and other actors within the field of education have internalized the EFA goals and can move towards meeting outstanding commitments independently and without any further prompting or advocacy.

The argument against this option is: although the large Forum meetings, the Steering Committee and Secretariat should not become permanent fixtures, to discontinue the Forum and disband the Steering Committee and Secretariat at this time would be premature. While substantial progress has been made towards many of the EFA goals, the outstanding commitments merit and justify the continuation of consultation, collaboration, co-operation and sharing of experiences between agencies, countries and organizations of the civil society. The mechanisms that were set up to foster global consultation on EFA should continue within the revised time frame set for the accomplishment of the EFA targets. The mechanisms set up to follow-up on the implementation of EFA should be disbanded when the goals of EFA have been achieved.

4.5.2 Continue the Forum, Steering Committee and Secretariat 'As Is'

This option sees the continuation of the Forum, Steering Committee and Secretariat in their present form. The argument in favour of this option is: the fundamental reasons for establishing the Forum, Steering Committee and Secretariat - to foster consultation and collaboration - have not changed over the decade. These mechanisms have evolved and been restructured in response to the demands and in the light of experience. In addition to the mission of consultation, collaboration and monitoring the Forum has taken on the role of advocacy for EFA. The Steering Committee has been restructured and is now broad-based and effective. At the end of the decade these mechanisms are functioning in the intended manner as can be judged by the end-of-decade review, regional consultations leading up to the World Conference in Dakar and the fact that EFA is now part of the world agenda. To alter these mechanisms could lead to loss of the momentum that is clearly in evidence at this time.

The argument against this option is: to continue 'as is' would leave unresolved several critical issues that have emerged and that need to be addressed. These include:

- The over-representation of agencies and the under-representation of countries in the Forum, even though the burden of implementing EFA resides with the countries

- The membership of the Steering Committee is too informal and fluid and requires formalization based on transparent criteria for nomination and appointment.

- The designation of convenors, and their veto voice outside of the Forum and Steering Committee, needs to be re-examined because in several ways this dual influence undermines the very notion of partnership implicit in the establishment of the Forum. The distinction between the convenors and others no longer appears justified on any basis other than history.

- The representation and relationships with Regions need to be strengthened and made more systematic.

- Advocacy for EFA should become a principal task of the Forum requiring structural changes that may include the appointment of high profile spokespersons mandated to promote EFA within agencies and countries.

- With the setting up of the UIS, the task of monitoring EFA progress with respect to capacity building and data gathering should be shifted from the Forum to the Institute.

In addition to the above, the view was expressed that leaving the Forum, Steering Committee and Secretariat as is would send the wrong signal. It would be tantamount to saying that nothing has been learned over the last ten years.

4.5.3 Integrate the Forum into UNESCO

The argument in favour of this option is: UNESCO is the specialized UN Agency whose mandate includes Education. EFA is a special initiative, sponsored by multilateral and bilateral agencies to champion the cause of basic education and to raise its world profile by highlighting its fundamental importance. After a decade it is time to integrate this special initiative into the institutional framework set up within the United Nations system. The EFA Secretariat is already located within UNESCO. Because of this, the Forum and the EFA movement more generally is often identified with this agency. In any case, over the decade of the 1990s, UNESCO has made by far the greatest single contribution to the continuation of EFA post-Jomtien. Taken together these factors justify the integration of the EFA mechanisms within the ongoing operations of UNESCO.

The argument against this option is:

- Basic education, and indeed education as a whole, cannot be conceived as a specialized undertaking that fits neatly into any one agency. Education is multifaceted in its impact and therefore has implications for almost all development agencies, multilateral and bilateral. No single agency, including UNESCO, can claim, or should be given, exclusive rights to initiatives in education.

- Locating the Forum in UNESCO would result in the loss of inter-agency partnerships and collaboration that now exist within the Forum. The latter provides neutral ground that renders the space and opportunity for inter-agency collaboration.

- UNESCO is a formal inter-governmental organization. The Forum is an informal mechanism in which membership is premised on the notion of personal capacity that does not carry with it institutional obligations. Integrating the Forum into UNESCO would change its character fundamentally and for the worse.

- Apart from losing its identity, the Forum would drown in the UNESCO bureaucracy.

- The Forum currently represents an expanding network that includes agencies, countries, organizations of civil society and universities. As such it is unique in the world of development. Integration into UNESCO would dismantle this unique network.

- Moreover, this option assumes that UNESCO could be persuaded to integrate the Forum into its structure and functions.

It should be noted that the arguments made here against integrating the Forum into UNESCO would also hold true for similar action with respect to any other of the four sponsoring agencies: UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank.

4.5.4 Establish the Forum as a Separate and Autonomous Organization

This option establishes the Forum as an autonomous organization separate and apart from UNESCO or any of the UN agencies. The exact model for this autonomous organization cannot be specified except to say that it would tend towards a network structure allowing for the active participation of countries, agencies, and organizations of civil society.

The argument in favour of this option is: the Forum would have its own identity that would be clear and separate from those of existing agencies, especially UNESCO. Its autonomous character would give it the freedom to operate within the framework of its unique mandate. Further, as an autonomous organization the Forum would be attractive to many funding sources that do not currently feel comfortable to contribute to its operations and might even inspire larger contributions from some agencies that now give modest contributions to its work.

The argument against this option is: to establish the Forum as a separate and autonomous organization would:

- Institutionalize EFA with the implicit assumption that it is an ongoing activity unachievable in the foreseeable future. Should this assumption prove wrong then the organization would be faced with the crisis of closure or continuation with a new mission and mandate.

- Be expensive to establish with accommodation, staff and operating costs.

- Be establishing a new international organization at the very time when it is proving extremely challenging to keep existing organizations afloat. The fact of cost cutting and downsizing of UN agencies would seriously undermine the rationale to establish a new agency with a very narrow focus.

- Be challenged by the fact that in several of its functions it would of necessity overlap and duplicate the work of several existing organizations.

4.5.5. A Modified and Restructured Consultative Forum

This option consists of retaining the basic and implicit assumptions of the original notions of the Forum, retaining its best features and adding modifications.

These basic and implicit assumptions are:

- That the Forum should promote the achievement of EFA through fostering the spirit of sharing of ideas and experiences and promoting collaboration, co-operation and consultation amongst countries, multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs, organizations of civil society and foundations.

- The membership of the Forum should be informal and predicated on the notion of personal capacity without any implied obligations on the part of the countries, agencies and organizations from which members come.

- That the time frame for the existence and operation of the Forum should coincide with the achievement of EFA.

- That the Forum should not become another international agency duplicating the work of existing agencies.

- That the Forum should not be integrated into any existing agency.

- That UNESCO should continue to be the host agency in the day-to-day operation of the work of the Forum's Secretariat.

In addition, the Forum should retain some of the key features that have evolved in shaping its operations over the decade. These are:

- The large Forum meetings should be scheduled only at major points of review and assessment.

- A Forum Steering Committee should meet regularly (electronically and face to face). It should comprise members of national implementing agencies, funding agencies, advocacy agencies, organizations of civil society engaged in EFA.

- There should be a Management Committee comprised of agencies funding the work of the Forum, representatives of organizations of the civil society and representatives from regions.

- The Steering Committee should periodically elect a Chairperson and Alternate Chairperson to preside over its meetings and that of the Management Committee.

Simultaneously, this option consists of modification and restructuring of the existing structure of the Forum. These can be listed as follows:

- The mission and the mandate of the Forum needs to be re-examined and re-stated in the light of the Dakar review. Provisionally, the mandate should include a more prominent role for advocacy.

- The content of the Framework for Action and priorities identified should influence the functions of the Forum and the terms of reference of its constituent elements (e.g. Steering Committee, Secretariat).

- While retaining responsibility for monitoring EFA progress, the Forum's monitoring role should be closely co-ordinated with the work of the UIS and/or with other competent agencies. The UIS should establish a programme of capacity building in the regions, building on good practice to date (e.g. the work of NESIS in Africa, ADEA and some RTAGS).

- The Forum should explore possible future relationships between National Plans for EFA and Monitoring. Currently, the monitoring exercise and the eighteen indicators stand free of country plans for EFA and internal monitoring systems. To be useful on the ground, monitoring needs to be linked with plans in particular country settings. Similarly, monitoring of progress in learning achievement needs to be linked with curricula and opportunities to learn in a particular country setting.

- The mandate and modus of the Forum should be expanded. It should include the building of a global EFA knowledge base to which all regions would contribute and have access, (including a knowledge base about potential funding mechanisms). Participants at Dakar should discuss further the desirability of including resource mobilization as a role for the Forum

- Membership of the Steering Committee should be formalized on the basis of agreed and transparent criteria. These criteria should relate to the functions/terms of reference of the Steering Committee.

- The relationship between the Forum and the regions should be strengthened and made more systematic.

- Representation of organizations of civil society should be increased in order to ensure the inclusion of a wider range of such organizations supporting EFA.

- Membership of the Forum should be extended to include business partners active in the work of supporting EFA

- The principle and practice of Convenors having a voice outside of the Forum, Steering Committee and Management Committee should be abandoned.

- Terms of reference for a Forum Secretariat need to be established.

4.5.6 Regionalizing the Consultative Forum

The essence of this option is that of re-balancing EFA activities and follow-up from the global to the regional level. In this option, global meetings could be made to coincide periodically with the UNESCO General Conference or global meetings of the International Bureau of Education (IBE). At the same time Regional Forums would be established to meet every three to five years to review progress, share experiences, establish and review collaboration and inspire action. The creation of Regional Forums would be matched by the establishment of Regional Steering Committees and the creation of small Regional Secretariats which would establish strong links with regional educational policy-making bodies, agencies funding EFA within the region, umbrella organizations of civil society in the region and universities doing research in support of EFA within the region.

A Global Steering Committee would be retained but its regional representatives would be drawn from the Regional Secretariats. The Global Steering Committee would meet probably only once per year. Alternatively, a high profile EFA Council could be established to meet once or twice per year, with these meeting rotating through the different regions. The main functions of the EFA Council would be advocacy, the dissemination of promising ideas and best practices in EFA and monitoring progress towards the achievement of EFA. Council Meetings would not only deal with the global EFA agenda, but also focus on the particular region in which the meeting is held.

The arguments in favour of this option are:

- Regionalization would represent a more bottom-up and less top-down approach than is currently the case.

- Being closer to the action, a regionalized approach to EFA follow-up is likely to achieve greater collaboration and greater impact in implementation.

- Most of the agencies involved in supporting EFA have regional offices that would become more closely involved in working together and with the countries in implementing EFA.

- These regional offices, plus the regional funding sources may be able to finance the operations of the Regional Forum and Secretariat, which would be less costly and therefore more affordable.

The argument against this approach is: there is currently no shortage of regional mechanisms in education in the various regions of the world. The merit in establishing new entities is questionable. Ten or eleven such mechanisms could be very costly to maintain. Cross-fertilization of ideas across regions is one of the great strengths of a global co-ordination mechanism that should be preserved.

4. 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In our view, Option 5, the Modified and Restructured Forum, or Option 6, The Regionalized Consultative Forum, or the incorporation of elements of 6 within 5, would be most appropriate at this time.

- These options appear most practical and therefore most speedily implemented.
- They are the options most likely to retain the momentum that has been generated as a result of the end-of-decade assessment and regional consultations.
- They are rooted and grounded in lessons learned in the process of following through from the World Conference in 1990 and therefore have an experiential base that is lacking in the other options.

4.6.1 Additional Guidelines

In addition, we recommend the following as guidelines, which in our opinion should facilitate the work of the modified, restructured and/or regionalized Consultative Forum.

- That in the discussion of each Forum function/activity, consideration be given to the question of levels of their initiation, planning, implementation and monitoring. Not all functions need to be initiated by a global body; not all functions need to be planned by a global body. Some may be initiated or planned better by national or regional bodies.
- That Global meetings on EFA be held in 2005, 2010 and 2015 and that these meetings be preceded by regional consultations.
- That information and communications technology be employed to enhance communication, collaboration and co-operation between the EFA partners at all levels of the EFA mechanisms, that is, meetings of the Forum, Steering Committee or Council, and Secretariat functions. Virtual Forum meetings should be organized periodically on specific target dimensions of any new framework for action that is adopted at Dakar.

If Option 5 is adopted, we recommend that consideration be given to the following guidelines:

- That the Steering Committee be restricted to no more than 50 members and that criteria for membership reflect the revised mandate of the Forum and its functions.
- That the Management Committee be restricted to no more than 20 members and that its membership be representative of the Steering Committee.
- That the term of membership be for a period of three years; members could serve for a maximum of two terms.

- That the term of office of Chairperson and alternate Chairperson be set as three years, and limited to two terms.

- That regions be encouraged to include the monitoring of EFA within existing mechanisms of regional collaboration, or organized and operated the same where no such mechanism exists.

- That the Forum Secretariat establish and maintain links with these regional mechanisms and that at least one member of the Steering Committee come from these regional bodies, in her/his personal capacity.

- That the Secretariat be strengthened and include one or two high profile advocates of EFA whose tasks would include raising the level of awareness of and commitment to EFA in countries and in agencies.

If Option 6 is adopted, we recommend that consideration be given to the following guidelines:

- That in creating the regional mechanisms every effort be made to integrate with existing and operational regional mechanisms in education in order to avoid duplication and fragmentation.

- That inter-regional communication, collaboration and co-operation be encouraged especially through the use of information and communications technology.

- That regional mechanisms be funded from resources from within the regions. In other words, bilateral and multilateral agencies, NGOs, foundations and countries within regions would be responsible for the regional mechanisms established to maintain EFA activities in the regions.

We further recommend that the matter of the follow-up of EFA after Dakar be a subject of specific discussion at the Conference. The role of the Forum in relation to other follow-up mechanisms should be discussed, with the Jomtien Conference Report (Appendix 3) providing a useful reference point. Guidelines for the Forum's future, its functions and form should be included in the Framework for Action agreed at the Conference.