

Education for all: Declaration of the summit of Nine High-Population countries

Education for all, beginning on Jomtien, has generated a new enthusiasm. Developing countries have already taken positive steps in breaking the cycle of illiteracy and poverty. To achieve the goal of EFA as set in Jomtien, the momentum of endeavours of these countries has to be kept up. In this view the summit of the nine high population countries was held in New Delhi, capital of India on 12-16 December, 1993 to reaffirm the commitment to the goal of EFA. UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO jointly organised the summit. A delegation from Bangladesh headed by Honourable Minister for Education Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar attended the summit. Other participating countries were Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan. The need for this summit was felt because these nine most populous countries were the most important actors in the EFA movement. They account for more than half the world's population and more than 70% of the world's adult illiterates. More over the population of these nine countries is greater today than that of the world's population in 1950. UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA estimate that some 70 million children in these countries are excluded from primary education. If current trends continue this number would reach 83 million by the end of the century.

The leaders of the participating nine countries shared experiences and exchanged views on different aspects of basic education. After detail discussions on different issues regarding EFA, leaders of the nine countries approved 'The Delhi Declaration' and signed

reaffirming the commitment to pursue the goals set in 1990 by the world conference on EFA and the world summit on children. The Delhi Declaration on EFA has four sections. The first section contains reaffirmed resolution of achieving the goal of world conference for children and world declaration on EFA of 1990 to fulfil the basic needs of every citizen by expanding adult education and universalizing the primary education.

The leaders of the nine countries attending Delhi conference have realized some realities which are reflected in the second section. They have agreed that,

1) The aspirations and developmental goals of the participating nations can only be fulfilled by ensuring education to all the citizens.

2) Education is the best means for promoting universal human values, human resource development and a mutual respect between people of diversified cultures.

3) Creative approaches are essential for imparting basic education to all both within and outside the formal systems.

4) The content and techniques of education should be developed in a way to serve the basic learning needs of individuals and societies, empower them, to alleviate poverty, to raise production, to improve the quality of life, to protect their environment and to enable the people play a meaningful role in building democratic societies and enriching cultural heritages.

5) Effective health service, adequate nutrition and proper child care are needed for all educational programmes.

6) Education and empowerment of women are key factors for their total development.

7) The pressure of population growth has seriously strained the capacity of the education systems:

8) Combating illiteracy is a social responsibility that needs a mutually shared commitment and active participation of all-governments, the families, communities and non-governmental

organizations irrespective of difference in opinions and political affiliations. Being aware of the vital role that education can play in the development of societies, the leaders of the participating countries enunciated the following pledges in third section of the declaration:

1) Adequate measures to ensure primary education to every child would be taken.

2) An integrated strategy of government and non-Government efforts would be adopted to provide basic education to all the citizens.

3) Disparities in access to Basic education arising out of gender, age, income, geographic remoteness, family, cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences would be removed.

4) Quality of basic education programmes would be ensured by bringing about necessary reforms in education systems, improving status, training and conditions of teacher and developing more effective learning teaching materials.

5) Efforts would be made to ensure that a growing share of National and community resources dedicated to Basic education, Resource management would also be improved.

6) Human development would get top priority at National and other levels.

7) People from all walks of

life would be brought under the same umbrella to achieve the goals of EFA.

8) The participating countries would endorse the framework for action accompanying the declaration and share their experiences among themselves and with the global community.

In the last section of the declaration, the participating leaders called upon all other nations and international aid giving agencies:

a) To extend their helping hand and support towards the participating countries in improving National capacities for expanding Basic education service in the respective countries.

b) To recognize education to be a critical investment and to promote an international environment to enable the participating countries for sustainable socio-economic development.

c). To reaffirm the commitment to the goal of and to intensify their efforts to achieve the goal by 2000 AD.

Amid wide applause, leaders from nine participating countries signed the Declaration on behalf of respective government in Vigyan Bhawan Delhi.

To implement Delhi Declaration, a Frame work for action on EFA has been supported by the participating countries. In consistence with these frame work of action, the participating countries will set goals and strategies on priority basis for their own National plan of Actions.

The initiatives and the commitment of the nine countries reflected in the Delhi Declaration in their pursuit of EFA goals, through promotion of international cooperation will be recorded in history as a significant chapter in human progress and international co-operation.