



Education International  
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**act:onaid**

The need for quality teachers to achieve EFA

# Building strategic partnerships between teachers' unions and NGOs



# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	
<b>The context: challenges facing public education</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	
<b>Rationale for deepening partnership between unions and NGOs</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	
<b>Critical issues for convergence</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.1</b>	
<b>Macro-economics and education</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.2</b>	
<b>Addressing the question of non-professionals</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.3</b>	
<b>Gender and education</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.4</b>	
<b>HIV and education</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.5</b>	
<b>School-level governance</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3.6</b>	
<b>Privatisation and public education</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.7</b>	
<b>Building a code of ethics</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Annex 1:</b>	
<b>Participants</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Annex 2:</b>	
<b>Background information</b>	<b>21</b>

**F**orty senior Education International (EI) and ActionAid (AAI) representatives from across India, Nepal, Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Brazil met in the Parktonian Hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa, over three days in April 2006. This publication is a composite text of the working paper produced for the meeting and the recommendations adopted at the end of the meeting.

4 In the meeting there was a clear convergence of political understanding that served to build strong relationships of trust between the teachers' union and ActionAid delegates. It became clear that Education International and ActionAid share a deep passion for securing quality basic education for all. Both organisations see education as a fundamental right and as a defining responsibility of governments. Both recognise that achieving quality education depends more than anything on the availability of quality teachers. We see the commitments in the Dakar Framework of Action on Education For All (EFA), and the education Millennium Development Goals drawn from that, as key reference points, to which all governments should be held accountable.

We believe that the dialogue that started at the Parktonian meeting needs to be extended to the country level, involving all teachers' unions and NGOs committed to EFA. This paper lays out some of the reasons why building trust between teachers' unions and education NGOs has not been easy. It then goes on to identify a series of issues around which joint work can be (and is being) developed.

Since Dakar some progress has been made. Today there are 20 million fewer children out of school than in 2000. But at this mid-term point we are still a long way from achieving the EFA goals – and it will take new forms of partnership to make the big breakthroughs that are needed. There is an urgent need to build stronger national education coalitions and campaigns around the world. NGOs and unions have mutually reinforcing strengths. Together we can build truly formidable platforms, placing education at the top of the political agenda. Together we can ensure that the call for quality public education based on quality teachers is heard everywhere.

We call on all teachers' unions and NGOs to deepen dialogue and cooperation. We hope that this paper helps to map out some of the ways in which this can be done.

# The context: challenges facing public education

Over one billion people, the majority of them women, lack a basic education. At least 77 million children are out of school, the majority of them girls. In 92 countries children have to pay to go to primary school (either through user fees or other charges) and this has a particular impact on girls' access to education. In many countries, International Monetary Fund (IMF) macro-economic constraints are undermining the capacity of the state to educate its citizens, whilst donor practices are diminishing accountability and transparency. Privatisation is accelerating and undermining the contract between State and citizen. While schools have the potential to transform pupils' lives for the better, in reality they often reproduce the injustices and inequalities found outside their doors. Too often children are crammed inhumanely in classes of a hundred, whilst trained teachers remain unemployed by governments whose hands are tied. Yet education saves lives. Each year that a child (especially a girl) stays in school their risk of HIV infection reduces. According to the Global Campaign for Education, if all children completed a primary education 700,000 lives a year would be saved.

The Dakar Framework for Action on Education, agreed in 2000, offers a vision for a better future, setting goals to achieve Education For All by 2015. But the global community has failed shamefully to follow up its pledges with adequate resources. A high-level meeting of donors convened in Brussels in May 2007 and committed to "Keeping Our Promises on Education", delivered less than 1% of the estimated \$16 billion in aid needed to achieve the goals. We already know that 90 countries failed to reach the Millennium Development Goal of

gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005. The rights of girls and women to education seem to be all too easily overlooked.

In order to achieve the Education For All goals, there needs to be a huge increase in spending on education over the next 10 years. Education systems will need to absorb the 77 million children presently out of primary school (let alone those excluded from secondary school) as well as respond to population growth. Class sizes in many countries need to be reduced (to at least 40 to 1) to ensure quality education. The impact of HIV/AIDS on the teaching profession also needs to be factored in. At present, 75% of high prevalence countries have no plans to train more teachers to cope with staff losses<sup>1</sup>. The effects of low wages must also be considered, as teachers from poor countries, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, leave the systems that trained them and migrate to work in the North.

Quality teachers are essential to quality education but this requirement is being ignored. Indeed, many governments are undertaking the large-scale recruitment of non-professional, para-professional or contract teachers. Neo-liberal policies imposed by the IMF leave governments with few alternatives, as constraints are placed on public spending, often including explicit limits on public sector pay.<sup>2</sup> Governments are faced with a direct contradiction. They are under international pressure to expand primary school enrolments but at the same time they are under even more powerful international pressure to limit public spending and avoid employing more teachers. The result is predictable, with governments either:

<sup>1</sup> See Deadly Inertia, GCE 2006

<sup>2</sup> See "Contradicting Commitments" by AAI/GCE 2005 and "Confronting the Contradictions", AAI 2007. These reports show how the IMF's disputed definition of macroeconomic stability focuses on low single-digit inflation rates and fiscal deficits, discouraging public spending on education – which is seen as "consumption" not as "investment".

- imposing wage freezes;
- imposing recruitment freezes (and accepting large class sizes);
- introducing contract-teachers (who can be hired and fired at will); or
- bringing non-professionals<sup>3</sup> into the workforce (with few qualifications and low salaries).

In many cases these policies are being actively advocated by donors, most notably the World Bank. The Fast Track Initiative's unjustified guideline on teachers' salary levels contributes to the pressure on some governments to consider low-cost alternatives to qualified teachers.

Unfortunately, many NGOs are implicated in these policies, running non-formal education (NFE) centres or community schools and recruiting contract or para-teachers, in order to improve access and retention in remote areas. Under financial pressure, governments have seized on these examples to justify recruiting non-professionals into the formal education system. In some cases this is done on a massive scale. For example, at least 500,000 non-professional teachers have been recruited in India in recent years. This situation has led to:

- distrust between unions and NGOs;
- the creation of a parallel and informal labour market that undermines the status of professional teachers;
- the division of the teaching population and consequently the weakening of the capacity of teacher's unions to engage in effective collective bargaining at national level;
- the spread of low-quality and unregulated private schools targeting poor parents (as schools can operate at very low cost paying non-professional teachers very low wages);
- a deterioration in the quality of education and the integrity of the public education system.

These sensitive issues need to be addressed directly if we want to build really strong national coalitions and campaigns. This is crucial because it is becoming increasingly clear that national governments will not deliver on their promises unless there is a strong, coordinated domestic constituency that can hold them accountable. The stakes are high and the challenges are great. The ideal of education as an equalising force in society is coming under direct threat. People are encouraged to give up all hope of building a unitary public education system that guarantees quality education for all. Faced with this, those who still believe in quality public education need to stand together and build new alliances.

This is why Education International and ActionAid have taken a strong stand, arguing that NGOs should not take on a service delivery role - absolving governments of their central responsibility to deliver on the right to education. Together we want to encourage others to join us in making a vocal stand in defence of quality public education, building stronger platforms or coalitions at a national and international level to oppose policies such as the use of non-professionals. There are many other critical issues on which teachers' unions and NGOs can work together effectively – this paper touches on some of these.

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<sup>3</sup> We have used the term non-professional though some people may refer to this group as "para-teachers" or "local teachers".

# Rationale for deepening partnership between unions and NGOs

**T**he need for a strong collective response in defence of public education has never been greater than it is today. We need to be creative in our response to the challenges, bringing different voices together through new platforms and alliances.

Globally, remarkable progress has been made in the past eight years, with the emergence of the **Global Campaign for Education**, which has kept education high on the global agenda. GCE was formed in 1999 by Education International, ActionAid, Oxfam and the Global March Against Child Labour. It took off rapidly, using the Dakar World Conference on EFA in April 2000 as a springboard for action. Many national coalitions formed under the inspiration of GCE, to put pressure on their governments to critically review progress towards the EFA goals set in 1990 in Jomtien and framed for achievement in 2000. There was an intensive process of lobbying and campaigning that led to a Framework for Action emerging from Dakar, which was clearly influenced by GCE and was seen to offer a positive way forward. Tom Bediako from EI (a senior teachers' union activist, now retired) warned global leaders in the final plenary session that civil society would be keeping an eye on governments to ensure they delivered on their promises. GCE has maintained that pressure since 2000, growing rapidly to gain a high international profile. A major priority of GCE has always been to link the NGOs and unions in each country and this is a requirement for all national coalitions that seek to affiliate to GCE.

However, the **national links between NGOs and unions** have often been relatively superficial. Whilst there are some positive exceptions, the coalitions are often dominated by NGOs and the teachers' unions have not

been as vocal as they could. There are continuing tensions and mistrust in many countries. There are also cultural differences in the ways in which the unions and NGOs work. They have different capacities and different approaches. Whilst a level of cooperation is achieved around key moments like the GCE Global Week of Action, these connections often fail to endure through the year.

**Global Action Week: Over 5 million people are mobilised in over 120 countries during the annual week of action. In 2005 the uniting slogan was “Send My Friend to School”. In 2006 it was “Every Child Needs a Teacher” and in 2007 the rallying cry was “Education Rights: Join Up Now”. Unions and NGOs have indeed joined up for specific events during these weeks – but in most countries this has not evolved into an enduring partnership or a truly trusting relationship. The time is ripe to take the next step and forge closer links.**

What then are the obstacles? Partly, there is the burden of history and partly a set of prejudices that need to be overcome. To explore this, a few sweeping generalisations and stereotypes might help...

**Teachers' unions perceive NGOs** as politically naïve, as opportunists who lack a credible base. To whom are NGOs accountable? No one. It is galling to the unions to see NGOs invited to the policy table with national government, especially when unions themselves are often excluded. The unions have seen the proliferation of NGOs in recent years with some alarm – almost as part of the neo-liberal agenda. It is as if NGOs are facilitating

the privatisation of poverty and responses to poverty. NGOs have often undermined public sector services, creating parallel provision and absolving governments of their responsibility. As such, NGOs have undermined people's rights to quality education. Most worryingly, NGOs have undermined the status of professional teachers by employing non-professional teachers in non-formal education centres. This opened the way for governments to justify the recruitment of non-professional teachers on a larger scale.

***In return NGOs have their own prejudices*** about professional teachers and teachers' unions. In rural areas they lament that teachers never turn up at school, or just turn up for three days a week. Sometimes NGOs accuse teachers of being lazy, bureaucratic and self-interested. Teachers' unions are sometimes seen by NGOs as self-interested and bureaucratic – concerned only with the salaries and conditions of teachers, and unwilling to reform. Some NGOs see union leaders as unrepresentative of their members, making false claims about their membership. Often unions are seen as party-political or co-opted in one way or another – lacking an independent voice. They are seen as pursuing agendas that have little to do with improving the quality of education for all children.

These stereotypes of course represent a gross exaggeration. Not all NGOs are the same and not all unions are the same. Some of the biggest critics of NGOs are within NGOs themselves and some of the biggest critics of unions are within unions.

***Many NGOs have changed dramatically*** in recent years, moving away from direct service delivery and adopting a rights-based approach. In the past, many NGOs were involved in running NFE centres or community schools – seeing this as an essential response to the basic needs of poor communities where large numbers of children were not reached by the government system. These centres usually employed local people as teachers and taught a reduced curriculum, often in the mother tongue, using child-centred methods and encouraging active community

involvement. But critical evaluations of this work have raised serious concerns. NGOs are rarely a permanent presence in the communities where they work and so after a few years most of them planned to hand over responsibility for their education centres to the government. But often governments were reluctant to take on the centres. Indeed, in districts where NGOs were running such centres the government would often, quite rationally, reduce its own investments in order to channel scarce resources elsewhere. The end result was that when NGOs withdrew, the centres would close and local people would struggle to re-engage the government. In responding to people's immediate needs, NGOs found themselves actually undermining their rights, increasing the distance between them and government services. Other problems included a lack of coherent planning – with NGO centres clustered in some locations and absent in others. Whilst some NGO centres were very good, some were bad – there was very little quality control. Besides, it became clear that NGO service provision could only ever be a drop in the ocean. Even in a context like Bangladesh where BRAC attracts huge donor support, their 35,000 centres only ever reached 8% of the population.

As a result, many NGOs have recognised that the real challenge lies in reforming the government system. The political naivety of the past has given way to a greater understanding of the national and international context in which NGOs operate. The importance of reinforcing the responsibility of the State and the capacity of governments to deliver on rights is now centre-stage. But this is not uniform. Some NGOs continue to run NFE centres and this continuing practice has prolonged the legacy of distrust between teachers' unions and NGOs. From the teachers' union perspective, these centres have undermined the professional status of teachers, paving the way for the World Bank and governments to employ non-professionals on a large scale.

***Trade unions*** have also been through an evolution in their approach to the wider development agenda. Many unions have not, in the past, considered themselves to be part of "civil society" and have focused closely on

collective bargaining, addressing the conditions of service and salaries of their members. This is changing, as the context of globalisation and rampant neo-liberalism presents new challenges. Unions have come to recognise the need to address wider development issues, especially the constraints on national policies and budgets. As this wider agenda becomes more important, unions are recognising the need to link with wider civil society.

As unions are taking on a wider agenda, some have changed their internal governance in ways that will enable them to build new links. There are changes in internal flows of communication between the leadership and grassroots, and external communication with new partners. Education International is in the forefront of the global union movement, expanding the roles of unions and their engagement with a wider agenda by promoting internal democracy, increasing involvement in development issues at national and international level and through campaigning, advocacy and lobbying work.

With NGOs and unions in a process of change, there is a real opportunity to overcome the legacy of distrust between them. There are many **reasons for working together** to build stronger partnerships in the future:

- The threats to quality public education have never been greater.
- Collectively our voice will always be stronger on those issues on which we agree to work together.
- We need to build stronger national coalitions on EFA to hold governments accountable and to achieve this we need to build greater trust between unions and NGOs.

- Our strengths are complementary. Teachers' unions have a clear base and authority that arises from representation of their members. Many NGOs have developed an expertise in policy analysis, lobbying and campaigning especially around financing.
- Teachers' unions and a growing number of NGOs oppose the creation of parallel systems and the privatisation of education.
- NGOs and unions recognise the major challenge of HIV/AIDS – both the impact the pandemic has on education and the role that education plays in addressing HIV/AIDS.
- Unions and NGOs are both engaged in the EFA debates at multiple levels from local to national, regional to global – and often find themselves in the same spaces.
- There are many shared convictions: that education should be higher up the political agenda, that financing constraints need to be addressed and that the key to sustainable progress is to make public schools work.

In the next sections we outline in more detail some areas where collaboration between unions and NGOs could be deepened to great effect:

- to challenge unjustifiable macro-economic constraints to education budgets;
- to challenge the spread of non-professional teachers;
- to address violence against girls in schools;
- to respond to HIV and AIDS;
- to develop joint positions on school governance;
- to confront privatisation and defend public education;
- to advance a code of ethics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This initial list was generated in the AAI / EI meeting in the Parktonian, Johannesburg South Africa, April 2006

# Critical issues for convergence

## 3.1 Macro-economics and education: challenging the IMF

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics estimates that 18 million new teachers are needed globally between now and 2015 to get all children into school in acceptable class sizes. At least 2.4 million new teachers will be needed in sub-Saharan Africa. Some countries will have to increase teacher numbers by more than 20% year-on-year (EFA GMR 2006). Thousands of new classrooms will have to be built and millions of new textbooks printed. It is clear that massive new investments need to be made. But it is equally clear that this growth in spending is impossible under the present macro-economic regime. The IMF dominates present macro-economic practices, either through conditions it imposes on countries in exchange for loans, or through its success in getting Ministries of Finance to internalise fundamentalist monetarist economics.

A recent IMF working paper (Fedelino *et al*, 2006) showed that between 2003 and 2005, the IMF imposed some conditionality on the public sector wage bill in half of the 42 countries studied; 17 of these faced quantitative ceilings on the wage bill, and for eight the ceiling was a 'hard' condition, a performance criterion that could cause an interruption in the IMF programme if breached. Conditionality is concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and Central America: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Nepal, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Dominica, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua.

In many other countries with an IMF loan arrangement, the Fund does not directly require a wage bill ceiling. Instead it targets single-digit inflation rates and low fiscal deficit levels, effectively limiting the size of the government budget relative to gross domestic product (GDP), including the budget for teachers. Based on these overall budgetary restrictions, the Ministry of Finance may set specific 'caps' on the number of teachers and health workers that can be hired.

However, the formula used in setting the ceilings remains unclear. Do the Ministry of Finance and the IMF assess the number of teachers needed to ensure quality education? Is there any analysis of rising enrolment rates in primary and secondary schools? Is there any consideration of the impact of these ceilings, especially on how they discourage girls' schooling and compromise long-term development goals? It seems not. Recent research in Mozambique, Malawi and Sierra Leone<sup>6</sup> showed that the Ministry of Education is not consulted by the IMF. Rather the Ministry of Education is simply told, after the decision has been taken, how many new teachers can be hired. As a senior education official in Sierra Leone explained, *"It is the ceiling that dictates how many more teachers we can hire. Schools tell us their needs, but we are rarely able to meet those requests."*

Despite compelling evidence that education is one of the soundest long-term economic investments a country can make, the IMF regards spending on education simply as "consumption" not as "productive investment". Their obsession with short-term macro-economic stability (over three to five years) and dogmatic attachment to inflation targets under 5%, prevents countries from making strategic long-term investments which could be essential for economic growth.

<sup>6</sup> Confronting the Contradictions: The IMF, Wage Bill Caps and the Case for Teachers. ActionAid 2007

The impact of these constraints on wage bills is clear. In **Kenya**, for example, the government implemented free primary education in 2003. As a result, enrolment rates soared from 5.8 million in 2002 to 7.1 million in 2004. However, in 1997 the IMF had set a cap on the number of teachers the government of Kenya can employ – limited at 235,000 teachers. Even when enrolment rose dramatically, the cap was not lifted and the government was not allowed to recruit more teachers. Class sizes rose dramatically and in rural schools pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) reached excessive levels, with teachers facing classrooms of over a hundred children. The quality of education plummeted.

IMF pressures on wage bills lead governments to choose one of four options:

- **Limiting teacher numbers** – Kenya needs 60,000 new teachers to deal with rising enrolments but teacher numbers are frozen at 1997 levels. Nepal is not allowed to employ any more teachers until 2009 even though enrolment campaigns have recently meant 200,000 more children are in school.
- **Freezing teacher wages** – often driving wages below the level at which teachers can make a living and thus contributing to a brain drain from countries like Ghana, Ethiopia and Bangladesh to Europe or the US. Sierra Leone has agreed to decrease its wage bill from 8.4% to 5.8% of GDP by 2008.
- Employing only **“contract teachers”** on short-term contracts – whether the 2-year contract (with no benefits and lower pay) now routinely offered to teachers in Nigeria or 10-month contracts offered

in some other contexts.

- Employing **non-professional teachers** – paying people with few or no qualifications a third of a proper teacher’s salary, such as in India where at least 220,000 non-professionals have now been introduced leading to major concerns about quality. The status of teachers is undermined and the bargaining power of teachers’ unions is destroyed, as non-professionals are not allowed to unionise.

This last solution is the one most actively supported by the **World Bank**. Independent country studies undertaken in 2005/6 as part of a review of the World Bank’s investments in primary education since 1990 (by the Independent Evaluation Group) showed that the World Bank has supported the spread of “para-professional” teachers in many countries. Reports from Mali, Pakistan and Peru revealed how the pay, status and conditions of teachers have fallen in recent years. The Bank refused to address this and refused to cover recurrent costs such as teacher salaries – even when it was clear that this was what countries most desperately needed. Teacher salaries make up the vast bulk of the education budget and if donors refuse to use their funding for this then they are meddling at the margins.

Rather than invest in urgently needed professional teachers, the World Bank has used such situations to promote the use of non-professional teachers as the only viable solution for countries. They have supported the closing of teacher training colleges or the reduction of training courses (e.g. from two to one year). Most

**Malawi<sup>7</sup>**

- **The Ministry of Education continues to struggle with the aftermath of the launch of free primary education in 1994. The government initially responded to the huge increase in demand by hiring 22,000 untrained teachers. Only a handful of additional new teachers have been hired since then, as no new teachers have received pre-service training in the last 10 years.**
- **Enrolment rates have continued to rise. As a result, the quality of education is poor. The PTR remains high at 72:1. Malawi has the lowest completion rate for girls and boys of all three countries studied: 27% and 32% respectively. To provide quality primary education, the PTR needs to fall to 40:1 by 2015, which would require government to hire 94,777 teachers. At the moment 45,268 teachers are employed.**
- **There continues to be a wage bill ceiling at 7.2% of GDP. Inflation is targeted to decrease to 5%, and the fiscal deficit target is expected to fall to 0% by 2009. Ambitiously, the government hopes to meet these targets by limiting government expenditure to 39.5% of GDP. This will limit expenditure on the wage bill – preventing the recruitment of urgently needed teachers.**

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

especially they have supported schemes for the rapid recruitment of a new cadre of non-professionals. Unfortunately the World Bank has not supported decent training programmes for this new cadre nor invested in programmes to facilitate transition from such schemes. For the World Bank, it seems, this is a permanent low cost solution – low-quality cheap labour to replace professional teachers.

The growing international pressure for countries to abolish explicit *user fees* in primary education (which governments in many countries have done, e.g. Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Malawi, Zambia) makes addressing the macro-economic constraints even more urgent. When there are sudden increases in enrolments, governments have to be able to respond by recruiting more trained teachers. The alternative is to create a situation where it is almost impossible for teachers to teach and for children to learn – with absurdly large class sizes and unacceptable working conditions for teachers. Sadly this is the reality in many countries.

The control that the IMF, a single organization, retains over the monetary and fiscal policies of other countries is astonishing. If countries do not abide by its policies, then all aid can and has been cut off. This raises major issues around North-South power relations:

- Policies are not decided by national goals. Education may be recognized as a fundamental right in the Constitution, but this priority is not reflected in budget allocations because of the constraints imposed by IMF policies.
- As a result, policy space is severely limited, throwing into question a country's right to democratic governance and control over its own economy. Parliaments are often not consulted on the agreements made between the IMF and the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance.
- All this contributes to eroding the role of the state in providing education.

Poor countries are under ever more international pressure to reduce poverty, especially to invest in actions to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Yet the same international community is directly responsible for blocking this investment. There are even suggestions that if large amounts of new aid are mobilized for education (as promised by the G8), many countries will not be allowed to accept it as to do so would increase

inflationary pressures. Even if they do accept aid money for education, much of the money risks ending up in reserves rather than being spent on education. A recent Independent Evaluation Office report on the IMF showed that, where African countries have inflation rates over 5%, up to 85% of aid risks ending up in reserves.<sup>8</sup>

These absurd contradictions need to be exposed and they need to be urgently resolved. But when challenged about these issues the IMF response has been either:

- To claim critics are extremists advocating high inflation that will be damaging to poor people. The IMF has a vicious media and rapid-response team who will make up stories to make it look as if you are being ideological, cleverly disguising their own ideologically driven agenda. It is important to ensure that the focus is kept clearly on why the IMF pushes for excessively low inflation and avoid a situation where we can be dismissed as advocates of high inflation.
- To argue that they always insist on “protecting” education spending when negotiating with national governments. However, when you hear the word “protect” from the IMF you should read the word “freeze” because this is what they really mean. If an education system is expanding (with more children enrolling) how do you cope if your budget is frozen?

In the 2006 Parktonian meeting between Education International and ActionAid, the following **recommendations** emerged for collaborative work between unions and NGOs on this critical issue:

- **NGOs and unions should work together on national-level studies to better understand how IMF policies constrain budgets and contradict the achievement of education goals.**
- **NGOs and unions should link up with wider education coalitions nationally and internationally (with the Global Campaign for Education) on this work.**
- **Efforts should be made to build links with parliamentarians (working with existing committees or creating new ones) and to raise public awareness through links to national media.**
- **Connections should be made with work to demystify and track education budgets.**
- **Joint advocacy and campaigning should be developed to place this issue at the centre of national and international attention.**

<sup>8</sup> The IMF and Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa, IMF 2007

## 3.2 Addressing the question of non-professionals

As noted in the previous section, the World Bank is now pushing the use of non-professional teachers as the only way for many countries to deal with the macro-economic constraints.

In April 2006 Adrian Verspoor, a World Bank education stalwart, presented two pieces of supposed “scientific research” to a major international conference in Africa convened by ADEA. One piece of research claimed to show that there was no link between teacher training and learning outcomes. The other argued that there were no differences in learning outcomes in Africa when children were in classes of up to 60. The policy message to Ministers was clear: close down teacher training colleges, employ non-professionals and cram more children into each classroom. This is surely a recipe for disaster and represents the World Bank at its most irresponsible – collecting policy-based evidence to justify ideological positions.

This sort of positioning by the World Bank exacerbates an already problematic situation where many teachers, especially in rural schools, are untrained (according to the 2006 EFA GMR, 20% of primary teachers in Africa

and 30% in South Asia are untrained). The active promotion of non-professional teachers as a solution is at its most vigorous and intensive in francophone West Africa and South Asia, but there are similar approaches emerging in East and Central Africa and Latin America. This trend is likely to spread to many more countries in the coming years unless a very strong stand is taken. The EFA Fast Track Initiative is part of the problem here, both for having recommended a wage level for teachers set at 3.5% of GDP per capita (which has no credible basis) and for then encouraging countries to calculate average salaries of teachers in a two-tier system (for “civil service teachers” and “contract teachers”).

NGOs are also partly to blame for creating this situation. NGOs, in their noble intention to improve access and retention in remote areas, run non-formal education centres or community schools, recruiting local people as contract or para-teachers. Governments, under financial pressure (and sometimes with active support from the World Bank), have seized on these examples to justify recruiting non-professionals into the formal education system. In some cases this is done on a massive scale (see box on India).

Education International is deeply concerned about this situation and has initiated a dialogue with the World Bank and others (ADEA, UNESCO), for example in

### The case of para-teachers in India (from “Contradicting Commitments”, GCE 2005)

India provides a good example of how the implementation of IMF policies can lead to the hiring of para-teachers. After the launch of the World Bank supported ‘District Primary Education Programme’ in the 1990’s, India has witnessed a phenomenal rise in the number of para-teachers from primary to senior secondary schools. The most recent figures from the Ministry of Human Resource Development record that more than 220,000 para-teachers were engaged in full-time regular schools during the period from 1994-1999. In Andhra Pradesh – 35,000; Assam – 2,332; Gujarat – 26,485; Himachal Pradesh – 10,961; Kerala – 385; Madhya Pradesh – 1,18,000; Orissa – 380; West Bengal – 8,065; Uttar Pradesh – 19,758; Rajasthan – 18,269. Given that this practice is now firmly entrenched in almost every state of the country, the present count is likely to be substantially higher. Unofficial estimates put it in excess of 500,000.

Recruitment procedures and service conditions of these teachers vary considerably across the states, as does

the underlying stated rationale. In some states, such schemes were seen as interim or exceptional measures, whereas in others they are long-term policy. Madhya Pradesh comes in the latter category, where the regular teacher cadre is disappearing. Gradually, the exception appears to become the ‘norm’ all over the country. Often such a move is justified in financial terms; for one regular teacher’s salary, three to five para-teachers can be appointed.

However, there are now a large number of field studies that suggest that such schemes have little merit. As well as creating ‘dualism’ within public provision, the damage to education quality has been huge. World Bank reports are completely contradictory to these field studies and view Madhya Pradesh as providing “the most promising developments in primary education where communities have been allowed to hire informal teachers at much lower wages than possible in the civil service with much better performance in terms of attendance as well as educational outcomes”.

Bamako in November 2004. However, some World Bank people in this process are actively arguing for the benefits of non-professionals and there has not been a strong coordinated stand against this. NGOs, who have been part of the problem, have generally not taken a strong public stand and yet clearly they should do so. A united front between unions and NGOs on this issue could make a real difference, focusing attention on the importance of a quality teacher for quality education.

For a collective voice to be heard clearly it is important for unions and NGOs in different countries to develop a comprehensive position on this key issue. A blanket “no” to non-professionals is unlikely to be effective. Teachers’ unions and NGOs need to consider the following, relating these to existing ILO standards:

- What happens when user fees are abolished and enrolment rises suddenly? Or what happens post-conflict when the education system needs to be rebuilt and there is a shortage of teachers. We need to agree what measures are acceptable in such emergency contexts to get a new cadre of people into schools.
- How is the transition from such situations to full professionalisation best managed? What are reasonable timeframes and procedures? What are the broad guidelines for acceptable practice in respect of in-service training and progressive qualification for these groups?
- What are the minimum rights (including union rights) of non-professional teachers during transition periods? How do we guarantee acceptable working conditions and what happens if these are violated?
- How do we deal with situations where decentralization means communities employ non-professional teachers for local schools (i.e. it is not part of a central government scheme – even if government policy creates the environment that makes this happen)?
- What happens when there is a real need to bring new groups of people into the teaching profession, for example women or people from certain minority groups? What are acceptable changes to entry requirements to incentivise new groups into the teaching profession and how should such groups be supported?
- What changes are acceptable in response to HIV/AIDS?
- What are the parameters within which parents and other local people can be brought into schools as teachers’ assistants? How can we ensure that

positive inputs don’t have a negative impact on the professional status of teachers? Teachers’ unions in many countries have worked extensively on this question.

Teachers’ unions and progressive NGOs can develop strong and clear positions on these questions, adapted to their national context. They can also play a key role in reaching out to many others, including other NGOs, governments, bi-laterals and multilaterals to sign up to a code of good practice. Unless action is taken on this question, the spread of non-professional teachers will have a devastating impact on the teaching profession as a whole. As non-professional teachers organize themselves into separate associations, existing teachers’ unions will find their bargaining power diminished – so they will be unable to negotiate liveable wages, fair contracts and decent working conditions. Everyone stands to lose from this, especially children.

The following **recommendations** emerged from the Parktonian meeting in 2006 and may serve as a useful reference point for national discussions:

- **There should be no more recruitment of non-professional teachers. It is a violation of children’s right to quality education and leads to discrimination against poor children!**
- **Government should be the employers of all teachers in the public education system, with salaries set through national processes of collective bargaining.**
- **Governments should undertake workforce planning from now to 2015 to determine the number of teachers needed year-on-year to get all children into school in acceptable class sizes (and a practice of ten-year comprehensive demographic-based education planning should always be maintained). Governments should then invest in significantly expanding teacher-training facilities to ensure that sufficient numbers of professional teachers are trained.**
- **In situations of unexpected or rapid expansion (e.g. following abolition of user fees), governments should first bring into the workforce any unemployed trained teachers or retired professional teachers – and seek to attract back into frontline teaching any trained teachers who are otherwise employed. If there is a remaining gap, then, in consultation with teacher unions, emergency measures may be taken to bring in a temporary new cadre, who**

should be given accelerated opportunities for full professionalisation within a maximum of five years. Emergency measures may also be needed in situations of conflict but there should be explicit plans for time-bound transition agreed from the start.

- Clear agreements should be established on the minimum standards for pre-service teacher training, with reference to ILO / UNESCO standards. There is a need to improve the quality of present teacher training provision and to develop regulatory mechanisms to ensure all facilities deliver quality training.
- National teachers' unions should actively encourage existing non-professional teachers to become members.
- Existing non-professional teachers should be

integrated into the professional workforce. They should be given access to quality distance education courses, backed up with face-to-face formal courses in vacations and school-level mentoring and support, leading to public examinations which must be achieved within a maximum five-year timeframe.

- There should be an end to single-teacher schools. Progress should be made rapidly towards having one teacher per grade, at least one classroom per grade, adequate sanitation facilities, and a balance of female and male teachers.
- All teachers should have access to good quality professional development courses and ongoing training.

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### 3.3 Gender and education: violence against girls

The majority of teachers' unions and NGOs are committed to challenging discrimination against women. Most teachers' unions have women's committees and most NGOs have staff working on women's rights. There are many areas where shared interest may develop, for example around work on violence against girls in schools, an issue taken up by women's committees in many teachers' unions and also a focus of increasing attention by NGOs.

It is clear that these are sensitive issues and some discussion of gender violence in schools can place the blame wrongly on teachers rather than systems, or generalise from the example of a few bad teachers to damage the reputation of all teachers. But Education International recognises that this is not a reason for staying silent. By standing up against violations of trust and talking directly about these issues, systems can be put in place that will protect both girls and teachers.

For girls around the world, exercising the right to education means putting themselves at risk of abuse. Girls are at risk on the journey to and from school, in the classroom, in the school grounds, and in the family or community. Research shows that in many societies, girls not only face sexual harassment but are also under

pressure to restructure their behaviour to conform to what is considered culturally 'appropriate', so as not to 'invite' harassment. Moreover, cultures that maintain rigid control over women's sexuality are nervous about sexual 'improprieties' their daughter may commit and/or sexual violence they may encounter on the way to school. Violence and the threat of sexual violence is a significant factor impeding girls' access to education, especially when the schools are at distance from their residences.

Research shows that girls often bear the burden of housework and take on the role of caring for younger siblings; excessive housework impacts girls' performance and attendance in schools as it results in physical and mental fatigue. The same is true of girls employed as child labour. Girls' absenteeism and poor performance in schools in turn invites corporal punishment and public shaming by school authorities and teachers, which amplifies their disinclination to attend school. Early marriage and pregnancy have also been identified as impediments to securing girls' education. These factors impact on girls' education in two ways. If she gets married or becomes pregnant, the girl may find that her family and community circumscribe her mobility and choices. In many cases, schools themselves disallow married and pregnant students. It is also evident that girls of school-going age may be trafficked and/or coerced into prostitution. Poverty increases girls' vulnerability to trafficking and transactional sex with older men.

Even as we focus on violence in and around schools, it is imperative to understand that violence in education institutions is a mere reflection of violence in society. In fact, the rate of violence in homes and communities is often greater than violence in schools. In schools, violence takes the form of aggressive sexual behaviour, intimidation and physical assault by older boys; sexual advances by male teachers (even if this is rare); corporal punishment and verbal abuse. Male sexual aggression in schools, as in society, is normalized and girls respond with resignation and passivity. By denying that abuse and violence exists in schools, failing to institute policies and mechanisms that encourage reporting of abuse, and failing to punish the perpetrators and redress victimisation, schools become complicit in the abuse.

A recent *Model Policy<sup>9</sup> on Violence Against Girls in Schools* was developed out of a southern African meeting involving NGOs, unions, education coalitions and Ministries of Education. This provides a powerful reference point for NGOs and unions seeking a comprehensive response to the issue in their country.

To address these crucial issues we **recommend** that NGOs and unions should:

- **Collaborate to break the silence on this issue.**
- **Build conceptual understanding around the wide scope of direct and indirect violence affecting girls at home, on the way to school and in school.**
- **Undertake joint research and agree clear positions.**
- **Ensure gender-based violence is addressed seriously in teacher training colleges.**
- **Influence curriculum review processes to ensure gender issues and gender violence are effectively covered.**
- **Campaign jointly for zero tolerance towards violence against girls and to ensure perpetrators of violence are brought to justice.**
- **Ensure this is taken on by everyone and not just by women or women's committees.**

### 3.4 HIV and education

Many teachers' unions and NGOs are also actively engaged in work on HIV/AIDS and education. Education International has cooperated with the World Health Organisation on teacher training programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention in schools across 17 countries in Africa. The objective is to provide teachers with the skills necessary to prevent HIV infection for themselves, their colleagues and students. The programme also enables teachers to advocate for the role of schools in preventing HIV infection and to raise awareness on a number of HIV-related issues, including antiretroviral therapy, voluntary testing, stigma and discrimination, etc. The main goal of the programme is to have in each school of the countries involved, a trained teacher with valuable expertise in HIV/AIDS.

NGOs have also been active in addressing the interface of HIV and education. ActionAid has represented the Global Campaign for Education on the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education and HIV/AIDS. In 2006 the GCE published "Deadly Inertia" based on interviews

with civil society education coalitions and HIV coalitions in 20 countries. One possible area of common concern for unions and NGOs lies in how we can place teachers at the centre of the response to HIV/AIDS and how we can link this to work on gender inequality. Gender inequality is a major driver of HIV/AIDS epidemics around the world, as evidenced through the increasing feminisation of the epidemic. The same gender inequality that makes girls sexually vulnerable is also keeping girls out of school, denying them the protection that education offers.<sup>10</sup>

The inter-play between gender inequality, education and HIV is complex. Deep-rooted prejudices and underlying gender and power structures are embedded in schools as in wider society. Unless systematic steps are taken to transform schools, the potential for education to protect girls and contribute to greater equality in society, will be lost. Whilst there have been many initiatives to get HIV/AIDS into national education policies and national curricula, the Deadly Inertia report by GCE showed very little change in practices at the school level. The reason is clear. Teachers themselves are almost always

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<sup>9</sup> See Model Policy, ActionAid / OSISA 2006

<sup>10</sup> See Girl Power, ActionAid 2006

overlooked. Few teachers are trained adequately in using new materials and even fewer feel confident to translate training into classroom practice.

EI's work has started to reverse this trend in 17 countries, but much more could be done. There is a real need for new work linking effective education on HIV/AIDS and effective approaches to promoting gender equality in schools. Teachers need to be placed centre-stage. If schools are to be transformed, the central means to do so must be through the teachers who are their life-blood.

Most HIV/AIDS education or girls' education programmes tag on training for teachers as an after-thought, rather than making training and support to teachers the heart of the programme. Refocusing our energies on building the capacity of teachers to deal with difficult issues such as gender and HIV is the only way to create a school environment in which young people have the opportunity to critically assess historical gender inequalities and protect themselves from HIV. There is plenty of scope here for collaboration between teachers' unions and NGOs.

The following **recommendations** outline a way forward:

- **Governments should make a more comprehensive educational response to the pandemic and should recognise the important role played by teachers' unions.**
- **Workplace policies are urgently needed in all countries to defend the rights of teachers and students living with HIV.**
- **All pre-service teacher-training courses should integrate significant core programmes on HIV and related gender issues, using participatory methods.**
- **Closely evaluated in-service training programmes on HIV/AIDS are also required.**
- **Unions and NGOs should work together on research into the impact of HIV on education and should work together to develop effective models for pre-service and in-service training.**
- **Increased engagement with parents and wider communities is needed to challenge stigma and discrimination.**

### **3.5** **School-level governance**

Different structures of governance exist in different countries. However, in the context of widespread decentralisation it is important to recognise the role to be played by school management committees (SMCs) or governing bodies. Many NGOs have worked extensively in this areas and it is clearly important that SMCs should be systematically empowered. Equally, there are clear limits to the powers they should be given. Teachers' unions are concerned that SMCs should not hire or fire teachers or set salaries. Governments should be responsible for employing teachers and salaries should be set by national processes of collective bargaining. It is important for NGOs to recognise this – and this can be the basis for the developing some strong consensus on the roles of SMCs. The Parktonian meeting recommended that SMCs should:

- **Play a strong advisory role to head teachers and have clear links to district education authorities and school inspectorates. They should be empowered to register serious complaints against teachers (though not take disciplinary actions directly themselves).**
- **Have oversight of school budgets and be able to make recommendations about budget allocations (though not relating to salaries).**
- **Be active in strengthening relations with the local community, linking with PTAs and enabling parents to be involved in the life of the school, including mobilising parents to support teachers inside and outside the classroom.**
- **Be representative of all parents and actors in the local community (especially guaranteeing female participation), and have teachers' union representation.**
- **Be facilitated to develop district and national level platforms.**

## 3.6

### Privatisation and public education

Education is a fundamental right and a core government responsibility. Public education, even where under-resourced, remains the most effective means to guarantee quality education for all. Yet private education in multiple forms is on the rise everywhere, undermining the capacity for education to be an equalising force in society. NGOs and unions need to work together on this and the following **recommendations** from the Parktonian meeting may offer a starting point for national dialogue:

- **The rise of private education should be actively checked.**
- **The key means to reverse the rise of private schools is to improve the quality of public schools - getting more teachers, better infrastructure, more resources, better salaries,**

**manageable class sizes and better trained teachers.**

- **We should work together to fight for a common school system which is genuinely free, to ensure government schools work effectively and to win over parents so that they want to send their children to public schools.**
- **We should demand better regulation of private schools and an end to all government (and international donor) subsidies to private schools (and taxes on any profit-making institutions).**
- **All teachers in private schools should be governed by the same rules, regulations and salary scales as government teachers.**
- **We should exchange information about negotiation processes in the WTO and jointly lobby to oppose the inclusion of education in GATS.**

## 18

## 3.7

### Building code of ethics

One final area where NGOs and unions can work together concerns a code of ethics. This can build on the existing work of Education International to develop and popularise a code of ethics for teachers, which can be internalised by all stakeholders. In this respect we **recommend** that:

- **We should prioritise a positive code, which has a collective character.**
- **Our starting point should be the rights of children to quality education and the importance of building wider human values of solidarity, a culture of peace and moral behaviour, etc.**

# Conclusions

**T**his paper is a first attempt to map out issues where NGO and unions can work more closely together to ensure the achievement of quality public education for all. The initial positions have emerged from joint analysis between affiliates of Education International and ActionAid. Much more could be added by other NGOs – on a range of issues that are not yet addressed, for example to explore collaboration between unions and NGOs in fragile states or on issues of inclusive education. But this paper does not aim to be exhaustive. Instead it aims to outline an initial common agenda for deepening trust in order to build stronger national regional and global campaigning in defence of quality public education for all. The need has never been greater.

The time is also right for a deepening of partnerships between NGOs and unions. The donor community continues to fail to live up to its promises on resourcing for EFA (most recently in the disappointing donor meeting in Brussels in May 2007). Moreover many

governments across Africa, Asia and Latin America are failing to prioritise public education and do not commit sufficient resources to the sector (most fail to reach the recommended levels of 20% of national budgets being earmarked for education). Only by building much stronger national education coalitions will we succeed in holding governments accountable – and we can only do this by building deeper trust and cooperation between NGOs and teachers' unions.

If teachers' unions and NGOs can overcome some of the past tensions between them and deepen trust around a common vision of quality public education for all, then national coalitions and campaigns on education can build into formidable platforms, drawing on the mutually reinforcing strengths of NGOs and unions. The power of this convergence has already been seen in the Global Campaign for Education. Now is the time to build the links at every level – from local through to national and regional – so that the call for quality public education based on quality teachers is heard everywhere.

## Participants at the Education International/ActionAid meeting in Johannesburg, April 2006

No	Country	Surname	Name	Organisation
1	Brazil	DUTRA VIEIRA	Juçara	EI/ CNTE
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6		ARUN DONDE	Sulbha	
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9		CHIKADZA	Lucien	EI /TUM
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11	Nepal	C. REGMI	Shibesh	AAI
12		MATHEMA	Sujeeta	
13		SINGH RAWAL	Jhapat	EI/ NNTA
14		PRAKASH SHRESTHA	Birendra	
15	Nigeria	IGBUZOR	Otive	AI
16		ODEMWINGIE	Thomas	AAI
17		ABDULWAHED OMAR	Mallam Ibrahim	EI /NUT
18		OBONG	Ikpe Johnny	EI/NUT
19	Senegal	DIA	Aïssata	AAI
20		DIAOUNE	Amadou	EI/SUDES
21	Burkina	OUEDRAOGO	Andre Richard	AAI/A&A
22		HIEN	Lambert	EI/SNEAB
23	Tanzania	MUSHI	Rose	AAI
24		MMARI	Tumsifu	AAI
25		KIGUHE	Mwandile	EI/TTU
26		MVANGU	Anthony John	EI/TTU
27	Togo	KANNAE	Lawrence	PATC
28	RSA	KENT	Alex	GCE
29		SANDE MUKULURA	Caroline	AAI/RSA
30	London	ARCHER	David	AAI/IET
31		MARPHATIA	Akanksha	AAI/IET
32		BOLER	Tania	AA/IET
33	Nigeria	ALIYU	Balaraba	AAI/IET
34	RSA	DJITRINO	Victorine	AAI/IET
35	RSA	MOKOME	TSHEPISO	AAI/admin
36	Brussels	JOUEN	Elie	EI / DGS
37	CI	DOUMBIA	Salimata	EI/ IEB
38	Togo	FATOMA	Emanuel	EI/ARO
39		NAPOE	Assibi	EI/ARO

## Background information on Education International and ActionAid

**Education International** represents more than 29 million teachers and education workers. It seeks to improve the welfare and status of teachers and other education employees, protecting their human rights, their trade union rights and their professional freedoms. It has 348 member organizations operating in 166 countries, covering education from pre-school to university. With its headquarters in Brussels, EI is the world's largest global union federation, and the only one representing education workers in every corner of the globe. EI protects the rights of every teacher and education worker, and every student they educate. It assists in the development of democratic organisations for teachers and other education workers and it works to build solidarity & mutual co-operation.

EI regards free quality public education as a fundamental human right for all and insists that this should be achieved through the establishment, protection and promotion of publicly funded and regulated systems of education that provide equality of educational opportunity. It aims to promote peace, democracy, social justice and equality through the development of education and through the collective strength of teachers and education employees. It also promotes the political, social and economic conditions that are required for the realisation of the right to education in all nations. Indeed, EI fosters a concept of education directed towards international understanding and good will, the safeguarding of peace and freedom, and respect for human dignity. It works to combat racism and discrimination in education and in society and it gives particular attention to developing the leadership role and involvement of women in society.

**ActionAid** is an international development agency whose aim is to fight poverty worldwide. Formed in 1972, it now works in 43 countries helping over 13 million of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged people. ActionAid focuses on helping people fight for and gain their rights to food, education, healthcare and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. It has an annual income of about 150 million euros raised largely from 600,000 long-term supporters across Europe. It employs about 2,000 staff, 89% of who are from developing countries. In 2003, ActionAid established a new head office in Johannesburg, South Africa, and began the process of making all country programmes equal partners with an equal say. Its 2,000 partner organisations range from small community support groups to national alliances and international networks seeking education for all, trade justice, women's rights and action against HIV/AIDS.

ActionAid is a leading international NGO in the field of education. It is committed to working with excluded groups, to ensure that they can secure their right to free quality education within an equitable system as a key means to end poverty. It supports struggles to secure constitutional rights to basic education where these are not in place, and to ensure these rights are enforceable in practice. It pressurises governments and donors to dedicate adequate resources to ensure effective delivery of education for all. It seeks sustained and meaningful citizen participation and works to ensure that schools respect all children's rights, providing education that is empowering, relevant and of good quality. All of ActionAid's education work seeks to promote women's rights and gender equality.





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