



**REPORT OF THE**

**Inter-Agency  
Working  
Group on Life  
Skills in EFA**

**UNESCO, Paris, 29-31 March 2004**



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## **\*\*\*\*\* Background and context**

At the World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990, the international society raised concerns about the relevance of education and particularly for the need to focus on appropriate life skills for all learners from all parts of the world. Jomtien underscored the importance of teaching skills that are relevant to life. In partial response to this, some work was initiated by UN agencies, who found that inter-agency collaboration as well as a common understanding on life skills based on expressed learning needs worldwide among the agencies was critical to support learning systems in a coherent way. Initial work on life skills had concentrated on discussions around the definition and inventory of skills that might be considered "life skills".

Ten years after from the Jomtien Conference, the Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at the World Education Forum, gave new impetus to the promotion of quality in education, recognizing that Education For All (EFA) can only be achieved if the education provided is improved in ways that ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met. This is understood as ensuring equitable access to appropriate and high quality learning and life skills-based education applied to various learning areas or domains. In addition, it means giving everyone the means to acquire recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills for teaching and learning domains.

To further concretise this aspiration and to assess work to date in this area, *the Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA (IWGLSE)* was organized by UNESCO. Work in the field had indicated that inventories of skills were no longer as helpful as they once were. In a fast-changing world where specific skill requirements may be time- or content-specific, it became clear that our work needed to focus on education approaches that enable learners to learn life skills that are relevant to specific contexts in specific time frames.

Divided into six panels, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA considered some of the central issues within a **life skills approach to education** and proposed a synthesis of underlying principles and guidelines for planning life skills-based education, as well as, implementation and assessment. The first panel outlined the theoretical and practical foundations for the concept of life skills education within the larger context of EFA and sustainable human development. The following two panels discussed the underlying principles of life skills-based education, particularly in relation to the needs of the learner and implications for the provision of life skills-based education illustrated with national and regional experiences. The fourth and fifth panel concentrated on operationalizing a **life skills approach** to education and follow-up activities by participating agencies in order to further life skills-based education. The sixth and last panel discussed assessment of and monitoring the outcomes of a life skills approach to education as it applies to various specific domains, and quality indicators.

### ✨❖❖❖❖❖❖ **Opening and objectives of the meeting**

The Inter-Agency Working Group on 'Life Skills in EFA' was opened by Ms Mary Joy Pigozzi, Director of the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Quality Education. In her welcome and opening speech, Ms Pigozzi referred to the EFA Monitoring Report, which clearly demonstrates that the world is not on track in the field of understanding and implementing 'life skills', and stressed the need for United Nations agencies to work together in order to come to a conceptual agreement.

The main objectives of the meeting were outlined as:

#### **/// 1. Sharing of agencies' perspectives on life skills education.**

#### **/// 2. Establishing if there is a common framework for life skills education in EFA and if so can we ensure that:**

- > It is functional, i.e. can be applied to new challenges the learners face - Goal 3
- > It supports efforts to improve the quality of education - Goal 6;
- > It can be monitored within EFA processes.

#### **/// 3. Contributing to co-ordinated efforts to support life skills education for various learning domains in EFA through, for example :**

- > opportunities related to the International Conference on Education (ICE 2004) and the Decade on Education for a Sustainable Development;
- > contributions to the EFA Monitoring Report;
- > joint publications and projects



**Chair > Ms Cheryl VINCE-WHITMAN, Education Development Centre (EDC)**



**Rapporteur > Ms Parul BAKHSI**

**Mr Patrick WERQUIN, OECD**

*Education and skills: a presentation on the OECD perspective on life skills*

- ▲ Clear differentiation between skills for work and skills for life, particularly at the school level: schools are not designed to produce a workforce and the socialization aspect of education cannot be ignored.
- ▲ Difficulty in making policy recommendations in the field of life skills, as psycho-social abilities are not necessarily observable and thus difficult to measure.
- ▲ Impossibility of agreeing on a list of all specific life skills, the argument should rather be placed on underlying principles instead of a common list.

**Mr Jean-Luc DUBOIS, Capabilities and Sustainability Centre**

*Strengthening capabilities : Links to education for sustainable human development*

- ▲ Sustainable Development (SD) means satisfying the needs of the present generation without compromising the resources available for future generations, through three main features: multidimensional aspect, linkages between generations, focus on people's capacities.
- ▲ Education that focuses on skills building as concerns manual skills and psycho-social abilities provides a framework for enhancing basic functionings and capabilities respectively.
- ▲ Education should enhance people's capabilities in equitable terms, i.e. by ensuring access to quality education for all, is the best way to maintain social sustainability, and using education to transmit such capabilities from one generation to the next is the best way to ensure a sustainable human development.

**Ms Mary-Joy PIGOZZI, ED/PEQ, UNESCO**

*Promoting quality education*

- ▲ Recognition in EFA and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) of the need for a new family of skills, psycho-social abilities or life skills.
- ▲ 26 EFA action plans recognize the need to impart psychosocial abilities, 14 specifically referring to life skills in this respect, but few present a comprehensive approach for life skills education thus a need for an operational approach.
- ▲ Four Pillars of learning can be a framework within which life skills in EFA could be organized.
- ▲ Presentation of different components of quality education: 1) At the school level: Seek out learners; What the learner brings; Content; Processes; Learning environment. 2) At the system level: Effective managerial and administrative system; Implementation of good policies; Appropriate legislative frameworks; Resources: Learning outcomes measurement.

**Ms Amaya GILLESPIE, UN Study on Violence against Children**

*Life skills: origins and definitions*

- ▲ Life skills first defined in the late 1960s by psychologists in the clinical field as psycho-social abilities important in terms of personal development, thus the wholesale transfer to education can create confusion.
- ▲ Although psycho-social abilities are difficult to measure, it can be done through the expression of the skills in terms of behaviour.



\*\*\*\*\*PANEL 2\*\*\*\*\*

Life skills in EFA Goal 3: Ensuring the learning needs of the person

Panel 2 looked at life skills with particular reference to Goal 3, which focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, and the development of values, attitudes and skills to develop capacities to take control of your own life, to continue learning, to participate fully in society, and to work, through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills-based education related to specific learning areas.

The main question raised in this panel was what we mean by life skills development. There was discussion that 'life skills education' can be seen as an approach (process) to education, with the aim of helping people achieve something that they consider important, whether we use the term competencies, capabilities or life skills-based education becomes merely a matter of terminology; although it is necessary to ensure that this terminology is understood in the same way. In this respect, it was agreed that a life skills approach to education is a process, a new culture of learning, and that there is a strong need for on-going training that is cyclic and sustained. Given that the areas of education are generally accepted as content, methodology, psychological environment, context and output/product it was generally agreed that the concept of life skills based education is a part of all of these areas, in fact, part of quality education.

A few issues were raised with regard to gender and empowerment of women: the need for control over human resources and transforming existing ideologies that are embedded in educational systems. Will life skills be a way of dealing with violence against women and the changing of ideologies?

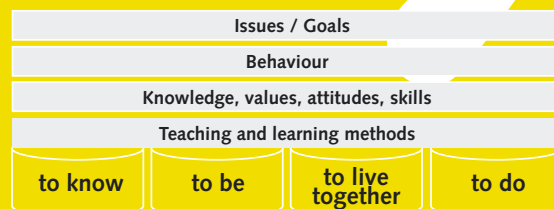
The main conclusion of this session was that life skills is not a domain, or subject, but cross-cutting applications of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills, which are important in the process of individual development and in lifelong learning. They are not just a set of skills, nor are they equal to survival skills, livelihood skills, or vocational skills but part of these skills. The importance is also not to see 'life skills' in isolation, but to view a life skills approach as a culmination of the combination of manual skills and psycho-social abilities.

Small group work trialled such a life skills approach on a range of issues/themes: each group chose a thematic area and discussed the goals, objectives, related knowledge values, attitudes and skills and then selecting the teaching/learning methods.

One area of agreement from the exercise was that there are different types of skills – (i) psychosocial skills and (ii) manual or hands on skills. Psychosocial skills were recognised as already being defined as life skills by some groups. While the group struggled with terminology to describe the concept, "manual or hands on skills" were described as those skills related to "making things or objects" or doing something, especially with the hands eg. first aid bandaging skills, switching on a computer, or putting on a condom. It was agreed that these should not be considered "life skills" because this leads to the futile task of making an endless list. It was made clear that both types of skills could be considered practical. Psychosocial skills are practical in the sense that, eg., being assertive requires actually doing something and so psychosocial skills should not be thought of as only cognitive – or only "happening in one's head".

There is still a need to define a platform that forms a basis for cooperation. A few of the terms that needed to be clarified were brainstormed at the end of the session:

- > what is a workable agreement that can help us to move forward?
- > How can we use active methods in all subjects?
- > In order to look at this new culture of learning we need to move beyond listing skills towards a conceptual framework as a basis on which we can expand the hierarchy of skills.



**Chair > Mr Rupert MACLEAN, UNESCO/UNEVOC**



**Rapporteur > Ms Parul BAKSHI**

**Ms Cheryl VINCE WHITMAN, EDC** *Life skills: Theory, research and practice*

- ▲ The separation of mental, social and physical health in individual development is not possible, thus it is necessary to observe the psychosocial elements,
- ▲ Research shows that programmes based on skills and participatory methods induce behavioural change.
- ▲ A unified and cohesive approach to life skills education is vital, addressing both the issues of the skills needed by the learner, the system and the learning environment.
- ▲ The challenge is how to get life skills-based programmes implemented in countries with small resources and with little invested on teachers

**Mr Wataru IWAMOTO, ED/STV, UNESCO** *Life skills in secondary, technical and vocational education*

- ▲ There is a need for «learning to do» skills to be addressed in a context where lack of employment is a reality and the need for life-long learning is a necessity.
- ▲ Life skills-based education implies a change of mind-set from the traditional knowledge-based view of education.
- ▲ In the field of secondary, technical and vocational education, there are different types of life skills relating to skills for living in society, skills for dealing with changing economies and skills for dealing with changing work patterns.

**Ms Madhu SINGH, UNESCO/UIE** *Life skills and lifelong learning*

- ▲ The foundational skills literacy, numeracy and life skills, need to be viewed in a wider framework of life long learning.
- ▲ Life skills have taken increased significance because of the recognition of the need for personal development in order to find solutions to new challenges.
- ▲ In the context of life long learning there is a need to look at formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences.

**Mr Charles GOLLMAR, WHO** *Skills-based health education and life skills: A global overview*

- ▲ Using the example of health based topics:, the life skills covered were all psycho-social (coping with pressure, emotions and stress, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, self assessment etc.).
- ▲ Factors of success of life skills-based programmes: commitment, sound theory, coordination, participatory methods, training, content, developmental appropriateness, participation, evaluation and follow-up.
- ▲ The challenges included teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, lack of status, time consumption of active learning methods.

**Mr Shigeru AOYAGI, ED/BAS, UNESCO** *Literacy, NFE and life skills*

- ▲ Knowledge and skills are an integral part of basic education and are required to enable learners to improve their performance in the context of lifelong learning.
- ▲ There has been a shift from “literacy plus” programmes which were based on the acquisition of practical skills towards giving importance to the personal development of the learners and enhancing their psychosocial abilities in order to act and interact as participating members of the society.
- ▲ Underlined that literacy and life skills are complementary and not sub-sets of each other.

**Ms Pamela BAXTER, UNESCO/UNHCR** *Life skills and the Peace Education Programme (PEP)*

- ▲ Demonstration through an activity that human beings enter interaction with a competitive view and often in a confrontational mode.
- ▲ PEP has formal and non-formal education components and is activity and discussion oriented, the cultural context comes from the group.: there is a transfer of behaviour into real life.



**Chair > Ms Françoise CAILLODS, UNESCO/IIEP**

**Rapporteur > Ms Parul BAKHSI**

**Mr Sheldon SHAEFFER, UNESCO/Bangkok**

*Perspectives in life skills education - Asia and the Pacific*

- ▲ Two major perceptions on life skills: 1) An Abstract one defining life skills as the ability and readiness to face and solve demands and challenges of everyday life; 2). A Practical one that sees life skills as an ever-expanding set of knowledge and skills in order to live safely and securely and to earn an income.
- ▲ Principal criteria defining LSE: Nature of the teaching methods and curriculum materials; knowledge as a tool for an improved quality of life; content demand-driven, context-specific, and competency-based curricula; interactive and learner-centred teaching methods; progressive assessment methods based on observed changes in a learner's acquisition and use of knowledge, the expression of values and attitudes, and interactions with the social and physical environment.
- ▲ Implications for UNESCO: assisting in establishing standards, setting targets and measures, developing capacities, and putting in place programmes, ie make the life skills term operational for countries, taking into account broader participation, capacity development, monitoring and evaluation needs.

**Mr Shiu-Kee CHU, UNESCO/Hanoi** *Life skills mapping in Vietnam*

- ▲ Traditionally life skills 'Learning to be a real human being', clarified in 2003 to mean individual's ability (knowledge, skills, attitude) to perform life functions and to fully participate in daily life, using a life skills approach based on the four pillars of learning.
- ▲ The concept of life skills in Vietnam include: Essential skills (literacy, numeracy); Generic skills (accessing information, critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication, etc.); Applied skills - to be applied in specific situations and contexts of socio-economic life (health, family, society, income-generation, etc.).

**Mr Alfredo ROJAS, UNESCO/Santiago**

*Planning and implementing life skills education in Latin America*

- ▲ In the 1980s decentralization was the key to achieve quality.
- ▲ In the 1990s, two new major reform changes:
  - 1) curricular flexibility allowing the schools to modify and to adapt activities or even content;
  - 2) cross-cutting objectives and contents in relation to life skills education to deal with emerging issues.
- ▲ The life skills approach seen as an opportunity for action : to cooperate with the schools providing them with tools to face the challenges of quality in classical subjects, as well as dealing with emerging issues traditionally dealing with life skills.



\*\*\*\*\***PANEL 4**\*\*\*\*\*  
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**Life skills in practice**

Panel 4 addressed life skills education in practice, from two different perspectives. Firstly as a domain; health education where life skills approaches have been extensively used for a long period of time, and the secondly as a process which supports teacher training, for the delivery of quality education across various learning areas/domains.

The similarities between an life skills approach to health education and other life skills-based programmes were stressed, opening discussion on whether other domains could profit from the a life skills-based approach to teaching and learning across various domains (promoting development of knowledge, attitudes and skills), but also through development of related policies, the learning environment and links to the community in this area.

**Chair > Ms Pamela BAXTER, UNESCO/UNHCR**  
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**Rapporteur > Ms Parul BAKSHI**

**Mr Jack JONES, WHO**  
*Planning skills-based health education (SBHE) and life skills*

- ▲ Distinction between specific psycho-social life skills (decision-making and critical thinking skills; coping and self-management skills; communication and inter personal skills) and domains of application (health topic addressed).
- ▲ Skills-based health education is complementary to general life skills-based education, which in turn is complementary to livelihood education (related to daily subsistence and income generation).
- ▲ Identified a series of logical steps are identified for life skills education: defining a goal, setting the outcomes and objectives, defining the content relevant to these objectives, developing teaching-learning methods and combining them, orienting teachers and educators.

**Ms Zahia FARSI, IUFM Lyon** *The importance of teacher training*

- ▲ Development of a teacher training manual illustrating a life skills approach using the four pillars of education.
- ▲ Four different teaching documents have been elaborated in order to tackle the major challenges that young people are faced with: HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, conflict and violence and environmental issues. Each document, through a series of participatory classroom activities looks at the psychosocial abilities that individuals need in order to attain well-being.

\*\*\*\*\***PANEL 5**\*\*\*\*\*  
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**Future activities**

Panel 5 addressed some future activities that could be envisaged in order to further a conceptual framework for life skills education for various learning domains. The workshop on “Quality Education and Competencies for Life” at the forthcoming 47th ICE, is a first opportunity to further this concept, as is the Trilingual Thesaurus; a normative instrument to clarify skills terminologies and an interactive teacher training tool to assist in capacity building of one of the most crucial actors in life skills education: the teacher. These tools are planned to be ready for the 5th International Conference on the Capability Approach “Knowledge and Public Action: Education, Responsibility, Collective Agency, Equity”, Paris, France, 11-14 September 2005.

**Chair > Ms Anna Maria HOFFMANN, ED/PEQ/IQL, UNESCO**

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**Rapporteur > Ms Parul BAKHSI**

**Ms Christine PANCHAUD, UNESCO/IBE**

*Life skills in the 47th International Conference on Education (ICE), IBE, 8-11 September 2004*

- ▲ 47th ICE (2004), is an international platform to promote policy dialogue on education on “Quality education for all young people: challenges, trends and priorities”, with a special workshop on Quality education and competencies for life to deal with meeting the needs of individuals and societies in any region of the world, in the field of literacy, numeracy, and “facts and skills for life”.
- ▲ Occasion to discuss key issues related to the quality of education for all young people: to identify consensual or controversial questions and the lessons to be learned; to stimulate and strengthen international dialogue on educational policies; to adopt a Message to the World, as well as Conclusions and Proposals for Action.

**Ms My VON EULER-CHELPIN, Consultant, UNESCO**

*Trilingual thesaurus on quality education*

- ▲ Difficulties to come to a common understanding of terms in one language, even more complex when using terms in several: the term “life skills” itself has no consensual equivalent in French or in Spanish.
- ▲ The thesaurus will structured as a multilingual dictionary to help to find exact equivalent in word or in descriptive terms, and guide users in their choices or terms by offering a variety or synonymes.

**Mr Alfredo ROJAS, UNESCO/Santiago**

*Teacher training simulation game on life skills*

- ▲ The TSG presents a virtual situation in which the participants must discuss problems, make agreement and make decisions, to allow teacher training to put in action the skills and knowledge acquired.



## ◆◆◆◆◆ Closing Session ◆◆◆◆◆

After a summing up of the three days by Ms Cheryl Vince-Whitman, EDC, and Mr Jean Luc Dubois, Capabilities Sustainability Centre, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA was closed by Mr John Daniel, Assistant Director-General for Education. In his closing note, Mr Daniel noted that the meeting has moved our thinking forward and helped to reconcile positions within a broader framework of **a life skills approach**.

### Conclusions and follow up

- ▲ There is further clarification of life skills-based education as a process, ie involving development of knowledge, attitudes (and values etc) and skills to be able to cope with new challenges throughout life, - as such life skills-based ed is a process to be applied to various learning areas, not a domain or subject in itself
- ▲ Life skills education is closely linked to sustainable human development through its objective of fostering human capabilities in present and future generations.
- ▲ A life skills-based approach to education should cover four dimensions:
  - 1) the individual dimension;
  - 2) the social dimension;
  - 3) the cognitive / reflective dimension; and
  - 4) the instrumental dimension.
- ▲ The four pillars of learning was seen as a possible platform for a life skills approach to quality education.
- ▲ The conceptual framework for a “life skills approach” to quality education should focus on operationalizing and monitoring the approach.
- ▲ Life skills are psychosocial skills which can be applied to specific learning domains and socio-cultural contexts.
- ▲ ‘Life Skills Education’ can be briefly described as having the following elements:
  - content that includes a balance of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills
  - uses interactive and learner-centred teaching methods.
  - includes behaviour change/development as part of its objectives
  - is based on participant needs (ie based on situation analysis etc and relates to real life)
  - is (therefore) gender-sensitive and rights based throughout
- ▲ Quality education curricula need to be context-specific, and competency-based.
- ▲ Assessment of life skills-based education (LSBE) at the local level and individual level must be based on observed changes in a learner’s acquisition and use of knowledge, the expression of values and attitudes, development of skills, and interactions with the social and physical environment.
- ▲ It is important to realise that proxy indicators are not necessarily comprehensive descriptors on their own. Ultimately, multiple sources of information should be used and triangulated.
- ▲ Emphasis should be given to assisting countries in setting up measurable life skills education programmes related to specific learning areas/domains, eg. that aim both at improving the general quality of education as well as enabling the learner to cope with new challenges.



☆☆☆☆☆ **Agenda** ☆☆☆☆☆

**Day 1 > MONDAY 29 March 2004**

**10h00  
>10h30**

**Opening Session**

**Chair > M.J. Pigozzi, Director, UNESCO-ED/PEQ**

▲ Welcome and objectives of the meeting: Sharing of agencies' perspectives on life skills; Life skills in EFA Goals; UN Coordinated efforts to support life skills in EFA.

**10h30  
>12h30**

**PANEL 1 ☆ Life Skills, EFA and Sustainable Human Development**

**Chair > C. Vince-Whitman, EDC**

- ▲ Education and Skills: making lifelong learning a reality for all (P. Werquin, OECD)
- ▲ Strengthening capabilities : Links to ESD (J.L. Dubois, CSC)
- ▲ Promoting quality education (M.J. Pigozzi, UNESCO- ED/PEQ)
- ▲ Life skills : Origins and definitions (A. Gillespie, UN Study on Violence on Children)

**14h00  
>15h00**

**PANEL 2 ☆ Life skills in EFA goal 3**

**Chair > R. Maclean, UNESCO/UNEVOC**

- ▲ Life skills: Theory, research and practice (C. Vince-Whitman, EDC)
- ▲ Life skills in secondary and vocational education (W. Iwamoto, UNESCO-ED/STV)
- ▲ Life skills in lifelong learning (M. Singh, UNESCO-UIE)

**15h30  
>16h30**

**PANEL 2 conitnued ☆ Life skills in EFA goal 3**

- ▲ Skills-based Health Education and Life Skills: A Global Overview (C. Gollmar, WHO)
- ▲ Literacy, non-formal education and life skills (S. Aoyagi, UNESCO-ED/BAS)
- ▲ Life skills and Peace Education (P. Baxter, UNESCO/UNHCR)

**16h30  
>17h30**

**Discussion and summing up**

**Day 2 > TUESDAY 30 March 2004**

**9h00  
>10h45**

**PANEL 2 conitnued ☆ Life skills in EFA goal 3**

**Chair > P. Baxter, UNESCO/UNHCR**

- ▲ Activity for discussing an inter-agency position on life skills

**11h15  
>13h00**

**PANEL 3 ◆ Life skills in efa goal 6 - quality education processes**

**Chair > F. Caillods, UNESCO-IIEP**

- ▲ Regional experiences from Asia and the Pacific (S. Shaeffer, UNESCO-Bangkok)
- ▲ Life skills mapping in Vietnam (S.K. Chu, UNESCO-Hanoi)
- ▲ Planning and implementing quality education (A. Rojas, UNESCO-Santiago)

**14h30  
>15h30**

**PANEL 4 ☆ Life skills in education in practice**

**Chair > P. Baxter, UNESCO/UNHCR**

- ▲ WHO: planning skills-based health education and life skills (J. Jones, WHO)
- ▲ Teacher guidelines for life skills education (Z. Farsi, IUFM)

**16h00  
>17h00**

**PANEL 5 ☆ Future activities**

**Chair > A.M. Hoffmann, UNESCO-ED/PEQ/IQL**

- ▲ International Conference on Education (C. Panchaud, UNESCO-IBE)
- ▲ Thesaurus (M. Von Euler, UNESCO-ED/PEQ/IQL)
- ▲ Training simulation game (A. Rojas, UNESCO-Santiago)



**Day 3 > WEDNESDAY 31 March 2004**

**9h00  
>11h00**

**PANEL 6 ★ Assessing life skills and EFA monitoring**

**Chair > J.L. Dubois, CSC**

- ▲ Monitoring life skills – UIS regional workshops (D. Lievesley, UNESCO-UIS)
- ▲ Monitoring learning achievement (V. Chinapah, UNESCO-ED/EPS)
- ▲ Monitoring Goals 3 and 6 (J. Van Ravens, UNESCO-ED/DFU/EFA Monitoring team)

**12h00  
>13h00**

**Closing session**

**Chair > J. Daniel, ADG/ED, UNESCO**

- ▲ Summary of Day 1-3, and discussion.

**★ ★ ★ ★ ★ List of participants ★ ★ ★ ★ ★**

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