

CONCEPT NOTE FOR EDUCATION IN GUYANA, SOUTH AMERICA

Basic Quality Education and Universal Secondary Education: A Synthesis of Strategies and Partnerships for contributing to the goal of Education for All

The Issue:

Guyana's education policy fully embraces the Jomtien declaration which officially pronounces "Education for All" and the Dakar World Education Conference which re-affirms commitment to ensure that all children with special emphasis on girls, have access to and complete primary education of good quality by 2015. This thrust is in consonance with some of the objectives for the country as outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the National Development Strategy, produced by civil society and the Education Strategy Plan 2003-2007.

In Guyana, the enrolment rates reflect an average of 80% but the corresponding completion rate indicate an average of xxx% in the primary school and xxx% in the secondary school with disparity of .

In its proposal for accessing funds for the Education for all –Fast Tract Initiative (EFA-FTI), the MOE was pellucid in stating that 33% of children in the primary school graduate functionally illiterate. Recognising that children eligible for secondary schools are disadvantaged by this fact of illiteracy and compounded by the situation of more candidates that places offered in secondary schools, the MOE has embarked on a focussed strategy for catering to universal secondary education. Another issue of concern is that the highly entrenched examinations oriented education system almost completely negates issues related to the affective domain of children. This later fact is now manifesting itself in low tolerance levels, poor communication and interpersonal skills.

Factors affecting repetition and drop outs can be attributed to limited number of trained teachers; low teacher morale; shortage of adequate teaching and learning materials; poor teacher/pupil, teacher/parents relationships; lack of professional support especially in disperse populations in difficult terrain; inflexible curricula; inappropriate methodologies; scarce technical and financial resources for inclusivity, hence threatening the right to education for children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, children with special needs including the gifted child and teen mothers who may never be re-integrated to mainstream schools.

Poverty and material deprivation, poor parenting, the seemingly disregard for the value of education, inadequate social safety nets which compound the vulnerabilities of children add to the dilemma of the school system. Undoubtedly, these issues mitigate against progress towards the MDGs, Education for All, and more broadly a sustained reduction in poverty.

Over the last 2 years, unprecedented flooding disrupted school programmes for extended periods

Technical and financial support, human resources and commitment from donors, policy makers, practitioners and community are vital to meeting the needs and potentials of the educational needs of the nation's children within the time frame set out in the MDGs

The Action

The interventions suggested herein is a vision for combating the issues challenging the achievement of basic quality education and provision of universal secondary education ensuring access to and successful completion in safe, stimulating culturally appropriate learner friendly schools.

The approach addresses the multiple barriers to quality education highlighted above through two main projects. These are the **Basic Quality Education and Gender Equality** and **Expanded Learning Opportunities in Secondary Schools**. The channels through which this will be done are: gender training for education administrators and teachers; parenting education; strengthening the capacities of teacher and parents for the support to student participation in schools; provision of distance learning for unqualified teachers in the hinterland and riverain areas and support to satellite learning/resource centres in hinterland communities; sustained programming in water and sanitation facilities and hygiene education for schools; technical and vocational training in secondary schools emphasizing non-traditional skills training for girls; consolidating and infusing strategies for Health and Family Life Education (HFLE)

The Strategy

Contribute to the MOE's "effective schools initiative" which encapsulates all facets of UNICEF's conceptualisation of Child Friendly Schools (CFS) as a rights based, interactive and learner friendly environment.

The Imperatives:

- Pre-service and on the job training for teachers in rights based education including peace education, child friendly, multi-grade, inclusive education and HFLE methodologies. This means that intervention in the Teachers' Training College is essential.
- Satellite Centres –to be used as learning and resource centres established and well equipped in all of the hinterland and riverain areas (complete with videos on demonstrative lessons with gender lenses and the various learning methodologies)
- Public Awareness programmes for communities and sensitisation programmes
- Implementation of a structured programme for technical and vocational training
- Development of a supportive, educative environment for teen mothers
- Development and maintenance of a comprehensive quality monitoring system for school drop outs and establishment of a programme for re-integration in schools

- Rehabilitation of welfare, guidance and counselling service for all school children
- Establishment of networks and linkages for effective referral systems
- Education for and in emergencies for teachers, children, parents and community
- Enhanced school feeding programme
- Rehabilitation of schools to match the age and needs of children

Activity

- Provide training for teachers on content and methodologies for interactive learning in a rights based gender sensitive school.
- Develop and print teaching and learning material for interactive learning as well as for situations in multigrade teaching
- Develop instrument for monitoring and certifying schools as “Effective”

Outputs

- ❖ Over a 5 year period increase by at least 50% the number of schools in each region with Effective Schools Status: increase of 50% of teachers in each region with skills in rights based education, CFS methodologies
- ❖ 10% of the school drop out population re-integrated into schools annually and actively engaged in programmes suited to their interests and aptitudes
- ❖ By end of 2010, multi-grade methodologies effectively used in all hinterland schools
- ❖ Teaching and learning materials developed for all schools utilizing multi-grade and child friendly methodologies
- ❖ By 2010, HFLE fully integrated in all secondary schools in Regions 3,4,5, and 6 and with at least 20% of teachers in each of these schools with knowledge and skills for the delivery of HFLE
- ❖ By end of 2007, national emergency plan for schools developed and implemented in all schools

The Impact

- ❖ A coordinated and country wide response to improving the education system for all boys and girls in Guyana
- ❖ UNICEF’s support to capacity building in HFLE including HIV/AIDS education, active participation, CFS, Peace Education, Emergency preparedness, Parent Education to the teaching and school management, parents and students will help to guarantee improved educational standards, school community partnerships and learning relevant to the realities of the boys and girls in Guyana.
- ❖ More boys and girls accessing quality education (including those with special needs), making informed and wiser decisions and completing school with greater academic success and positive attitudes for better lifestyles
- ❖ The provision of school supplies and teaching material and technical and vocational education will contribute to creating more stimulating and attractive

- learning environments which will be the impetus for greater student participation and completion
- ❖ Guaranteed ownership of education programmes and facilities through enhanced school community partnerships and stronger parent-student activism
 - ❖ Opportunities for more girls to access non-traditional skills training thus making them more competition in the informal/self-employed income generating systems
 - ❖ More skilled teachers especially females, giving better service to their home communities because of the opportunity of accessing training through distance mode

Partnerships

The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank (WB), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNECSO, the European Union (EU), the British based Pro-Natura , Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), the Department of International Fund for Development (DfiD) and UNICEF are agencies which have facets of education issues on their agenda, with their particular technical competencies and financial foci and systems which can be used to maximise resources for propelling the much needed actions for the children of Guyana to reach their fullest potential in safe, healthy, culturally appropriate and highly stimulating learning environments.