

Iranian National Commission for UNESCO

Celebrating EFA Global Action Week in the IR of Iran

19-25 April 2010



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Iranian National Commission for UNESCO
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Preface

Education for All is an international programme aiming above all at achieving equal access to quality education for all children, youth and adults. Since 2000 and the adoption of the Dakar Framework for Action for EFA, to achieve and to promote dialogue for an equal, appropriate and quality access to education through a global mobilising of all partners, UNESCO proposes each year a world week for EFA.

This year (2010), within the framework of the Global Action Week for EFA, UNESCO allocated 19-25 April to the theme of *Financing Quality Public Education: A Right for All*.

In line with other Member States, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO also celebrated the EFA Global Action Week by extensive awareness raising programmes, and meetings, all conducted in cooperation with the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, the Iranian Ministry of Education and other associated organisations. Other activities undertaken in this regards included translation and publication of the EFA Global Action Week Poster for 2010 and its distribution to various provinces at country level, translation of the message of the UNESCO Director General and transmitting it to the media for public awareness, publishing informative documents about the EFA programme and holding two specialised meetings on *Challenges of Quality Education* (20 April-Iranian National Commission for UNESCO), and *Advancements in Promoting the EFA Programme: Quality Education from the Standpoint of Sustainable Development* (26 April-Iranian Ministry of Education), a brief report of which follows.

We hope the present document can be a step forward to promoting and achieving EFA in Iran and achieving the 6 Dakar EFA Goals.

Session I

**“EFA Global Action Week”
Roundtable on Challenges of Quality Education
Tehran-IR of Iran
20 April 2010**



Iranian National Commission for UNESCO
May 2010

Dr M Reza Saeidabadi

Significance and Necessity of the Global EFA Programme

(Secretary General-Iranian National Commission for UNESCO)

First speaker of this session was Dr Saeidabadi, Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO whose opening remarks are summarised below.

In my capacity as the Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO I am pleased to congratulate, on behalf of my colleagues at the NatCom and myself, the educational body of the country including all teachers, professors, researchers, school principals, authorities, etc. on the occasion of EFA Global Action Week.

By celebrating this week UNESCO aims at awareness raising and furthering discussions for an equitable, appropriate and qualitative access to education through mobilising all stakeholders at global level. EFA Global Action Week provides a new perspective to UNESCO's international programmes in education and offers UNESCO Member States an opportunity to fulfil their commitments in relation to achieving the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action. A decade ago heads of 164 states including the IR of Iran, governmental and non-governmental organisations unanimously agreed upon mobilising their full efforts for achieving and putting into practice new activities in their countries to enable access to quality education for children, youth and adults by 2015. This all set the cornerstone for the development of the Dakar Framework for Action, according to which the participating states committed to help achieve the following objectives by 2015:

- i. Expand early childhood care and education;
- ii. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all;
- iii. Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults;
- iv. Increase adult literacy by 50 percent;
- v. Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015;
- vi. Improve the quality of education.

Each year, based on world priorities and necessities, UNESCO defines a motto for the EFA Global Action Week. This year's Global Action Week calls for increased funding for education and the motto is: *Financing Quality Public Education: A Right for All*. UNESCO thus aims at drawing attentions of governments and the public to increasing funding for education and the fact that education needs to be saved from economic crisis, to avoid crisis of human resources development. To overcome these crises, governments are called

upon to adopt supportive mechanisms aimed at helping the poor and vulnerable strata of the society.

Although recent years have seen a rise in financial aid for education, this field is still suffering from a budget deficit of 16 billion dollars. Education now no longer comprises the ability to read and write; it is defined by its quality. Education in this sense must meet national needs and priorities; it should be able to respond to the needs of knowledge societies as well as the emerging needs of an increasingly globalising world with special emphasis on education for sustainable development and dialogue among civilisations.

Since the Dakar meeting many has been achieved for instance the number of children who have enrolled in schools has increased, but many of the world's poorest countries are not on track to meet the EFA objectives.

According to world reports, there are still 75 million children out of school with about 753 million adults being deprived of the opportunity to even read and write. Millions of children are leaving school without having acquired basic skills (reading, writing and numeracy). In most countries the teacher to student ratio is one to forty. To achieve the Dakar objectives by 2015 some 18 million new teacher posts are required.

Poverty, gender, disability, bearing relations to ethnic and linguistic minorities, vulnerable living conditions in rural and at times even urban areas, war and natural disasters (earthquakes, floods- a living example is Haiti), are among important factors influencing education.

Achieving the EFA goals requires collective support, strong national will, financial resources, human power, technical skills, active institutions and strong political will power, increased number of qualified teachers, improving schools and management of the educational system, adopting preventive measures against HIV/AIDS and developing modern learning techniques. Within the past 10 years Iran has also taken effective steps in the path for promoting EFA at country level and in this trend some aspects have proven more successful than others.

Thus, in celebrating the EFA Global Action Week and organising this event, which focused most on an analysis of the challenges of quality education in Iran to prevent school drop-outs and educational failure and emphasised UNESCO's motto of funding quality education, the main aim sought by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office has been to evaluate activities undertaken so far and to present guidelines for improving policy-making and reinforcing activities aimed at achieving the EFA goals within the remaining 5-year period to 2015.

Next speaker of this session was Dr Dogani, Member to the Commission for Education and Research of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.

Dr Dogani

Policy-making in Quality Education and Adopting Preventive Measures against Drop-out in Iran (Representative and Member to the Commission for Education and Research, Islamic Consultative Assembly)

We are now living in the third millennium, known as the era of free and increased flow of information, enhanced inventions, discoveries and innovations and scientific achievements. Wisdom in this era is the basis of development, peoples' means of progress and the element ensuring sustainability of human societies and civilisations. Development is meaningless in the absence of wisdom. The 3rd and 4th National Development Plans and the 20-Year National Development Strategy Document also emphasise the importance of wisdom. Humans in this third millennium are the world's most significant asset; human power, organised programmes and resources are the three main driving elements for the development of societies. Empowering people and helping talents to thrive are a most important objective of modern societies and a mission to be accomplished by Governments with education being the key to achieving this objective. With respect to education, enabling every person's access to education is an objective most sought after by the IR of Iran and emphasised in the five-year development plans as well as the 20-Year National Development Strategy Document. Compulsory, free education for all in the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels is a responsibility to which, according to item 30 of the Constitution of the IR of Iran, the government is entitled. The Government is thus called upon, by item 30 of the Constitution, to adopt measures and provide the means for education up to the upper secondary level and in case of self-sufficiency, up to the tertiary level (higher education) for all. Thus educational space and financial resources gain great importance in this context. Our country has been very active in funding education. Financial aid in this area has increased to twelve thousand billion tomans from 1384 (2005) to 1389(2010).

In relation to gender equality we can boast significant achievements as well. In 1389 (2010) for instance, 63% of the total enrolled university students were women. Recent years have also seen an increase in the number of women enrolled in the various fields of engineering, agriculture and basic sciences, all scientific branches which inherently may not conform to their gender. Access to higher (Tertiary) education in Iran is a matter of talent and qualification.

Strategies that seem useful in quality transformation in education may be as follows:

- Developing a permanent educational strategy, a thoroughly examined national educational plan as well as a comprehensive educational system(one which unfortunately we do not have) ;

- Fundamental transformation of the main constituents of the educational system (we have not been successful in the public and private sectors);
- Renovating and re-organising human power in education and improving teacher's social dignity;
- Modifying teaching methods, to achieve greater wisdom, creativity and innovation, to replace the common memory-oriented methods;
- Creating the spirit of science-seeking, research, thought-orientedness and dynamism instead of inactivity in education;
- Supporting cultural elites and providing creative teachers with required facilities (in this view we have established, in cooperation with relevant organisations, a committee in the Commission for Education and Research aimed at preventing brain drain);
- Using modern technologies and enhancing teachers' scientific knowledge (greater effort needs to be exerted in these fields).

Growth of the national economy based on a knowledge-oriented approach is strongly emphasised in the first section of the 4th National Development Plan; the Document then explains the strategies adopted by the 5th National Development Plan and emphasises the need to use the guidelines provided in this Document as a road map for education, research and technology generation in the coming five years at country level. The 5th National Development Plan is aimed at achieving the objectives of the 20-year National Development Strategy.

Policies of the 5th National Development Plan in the various areas of science, culture and technology are summarised as bellow:

- Transformation of the higher education system and conducting research in:
 - Increasing funding for research up to 3% of the GNP by the end of the 5th National Development Plan;
 - Increasing the number of students entering into higher education by 20%.
- Empowering the non-governmental sector in science and technology (this is most emphasised in the budget for the year 1389 with regard to education in general, health, treatment and medical education and research and technology in particular);
- Accessing advanced nano and bio technologies, IT, ICTs and modern scientific advancements;

- Transforming the educational system in the areas of knowledge, skills and training with a view to improving the quality of the national educational system based on national needs and priorities and improving students' physical and mental health conditions;
- Improving social and human sciences by promoting their status;
- Attracting talented and motivated individuals;
- Revising and modifying educational methods and texts;
- Qualitative and quantitative promotion of research activities and institutions and promoting theorising, criticism and free thinking;
- Increasing various financial and intellectual support of elites and innovators in science and technology by improving skills, social and scientific status of researchers and research activities, eliminating financial risk-taking in research activities, innovations' education and commercialising their products;
- Completion and implementation of the National Comprehensive Scientific Report, already on the agenda of the Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution.

Dr Samarbakhsh, Programme Officer for Education at UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office was next to take the floor. Representing Mr Qunli Han, UNESCO Representative to the IR of Iran and Director of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, Dr Samarbakhsh briefed the session on UNESCO policies and programmes in education.

Dr G Reza Samarbakhsh
UNESCO Policies and Programmes on School Drop-Outs
(Programme Officer for Education, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office)

UNESCO's main themes in education are:

1. *Learning throughout life*, which comprises: education for all international coordination; education for all global monitoring report; early childhood education; technical and vocational education and training; literacy; secondary education; and higher education.

Early childhood is defined as the period from birth to 8 years old, the period in which 80% of an individual's character is formed, with the remaining part being completed from 20 to 25 years of age. Thus, early childhood education is of prime importance in the learning process.

2. *Improving education quality*, which comprises: teacher education; textbook development; inclusive education; policies and plans; languages in education; HIV and AIDS education; education for sustainable development; and gender and education.
3. *Promoting rights and freedoms*, which comprises: Human Rights education; post-conflict, post-disaster education; holocaust remembrance; and the right to education.

To achieve its goals in education UNESCO has established 6 education institutes worldwide:

- International Bureau of Education (IBE), Geneva , Switzerland
- International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), Paris, France and Buenos Aires, Argentina
- The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg, Germany
- Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), Moscow, Russian Federation
- International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC), Bonn, Germany
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Montreal, Canada
- European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES), Bucharest, Romania

I would now wish to refer to the relation between the EFA goals and the MDGs. Iran is also active in this area. Next September New York will be host to an international forum of the highest-ranking officials in education, to discuss countries' successes in achieving the MDGs. Universal education, health and literacy are among the Millennium Development Goals.

A second international conference that will be hosted in September this year is Moscow's conference on early childhood education, which is to be organised in joint effort with UNESCO and its Member States.

The floor was then given to Mr Manoucheher Fazlikhani who spoke on behalf of the Iranian Supreme Council for Education.

Mr Manouchehr Fazlikhani
Policies and Strategies of the Supreme Council for Education in Relation to the EFA Programme

(Representative, Supreme Council for Education)

Mr Manouchehr Fazlikhani explained the policies of the Supreme Council for Education, an important decision-making institute in education, as follows:

Today, achieving quality is the highlight of any competition. In line with achieving EFA goals at country level and promoting the quality and quantity of education, the Supreme Council for Education has undertaken extensive efforts summarised as below:

1. Making pre-primary education compulsory: the Supreme Council for Education has a number of adoptions in this regards. This has not been easy and is still an area that is challenged, but in spite of all difficulties for announcing this level of education as compulsory, the various provinces of the Country have been encouraged to provide the means for and facilitate pre-primary education for all. As a result of these efforts, we are now witness to a huge number of enrolments in this educational programme.
2. Developing a national plan for education: in this document, especially on quality improvement and structural transformation, i.e. the transformation of the Iranian educational system from 3 periods of primary (5-years), lower-secondary (3-years), higher-secondary (4-years) to two six-year periods of primary and secondary education, primary education has been extended by 1 year, which is proof of the importance attached to primary education.
3. Flexibility in educational programmes: absence of national educational coverage does not only imply inability to access education, but access to school buildings is also an issue, with regards to which the Ministry of Education has adopted effective measures. Today, students can easily access school buildings throughout Iran. The problem, though, lies elsewhere; these can be summarised as below:
 - a. Cultural issues;
 - b. Economic problems;
 - c. Employment issues.
4. Evaluation system in the Iranian Ministry of Education: quality is definable from two different viewpoints:
 - a. Learning-teaching quality (this item focuses on qualitative teaching methods);
 - b. Evaluating quality of facilities.
5. Distance education: this type of education can be considered as a sub-category of item 3 above, flexibility in educational programmes. It aims at educating those of the students who for certain

verifiable and acceptable reasons can not attend regular classes. This system now has over 200 thousand enrollees.

6. Policy for developing boarding schools and rural schools.

Subsequent to Mr Fazlikhani, Dr Moharam Aghazadeh, educational expert and university professor, took the floor who briefed the audience on quality education and its challenges in Iran.

Dr Moharam Aghazadeh
Challenges of Quality Education in Iran
(University Professor and Advisor to the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office in Education)

In describing quality in the field of education, Dr Aghazadeh explained that “quality can be defined from the three different aspects of consumerism, law and science.”

UNESCO and UNICEF believe quality education to be the outcome of some very simple items:

1. Healthy learner: one with good nutritional conditions and learning motivation;
2. Healthy environment: one which is safe, protected and conforms to the gender of the learner;
3. Appropriate and useful educational content;
4. Processes by which learned teachers adopt child-oriented methods for teaching;
5. Learning outcomes.

Research findings show that in the absence of a safe learning environment, learners will most probably experience mental problems when trying to concentrate on lessons. Educational content is another important issue. Unfortunately most of our educational programmes are planned in the absence of needs-assessment measures. It is thus important to know which of the programmes are based on needs-assessment and which are not. With regards to child-oriented approaches in teaching methods, it is important to note that it is upon teachers to provide students with learning opportunities. Today, learning patterns have undergone immense changes, calling for the adoption of new teaching methods by all. Teacher-oriented approaches must change to student-oriented approaches.

The following were referred to as constituents of quality education:

1. Quality learner;
2. Health, hygiene and nutrition;

3. Experiences from childhood psycho-social growth patterns;
4. Regular presence for learning;
5. Families' support of learning;

Unfortunately we have no defined plan for some lessons. For instance we have no plan for physical education and we have actually eliminated PE teachers from first and second grade programmes.

The question is: what quality-assessment system have we used when making any decision of the sort?

This question can be responded to by means of other questions.

Session II

**“EFA Global Action Week”
Roundtable on
Advancements in Promoting the EFA Programme:
Quality Education from the Standpoint of Sustainable Development
Tehran-IR of Iran
26 April 2010**



Iranian National Commission for UNESCO
May 2010

The second session in celebrations for the EFA Global Action Week was inaugurated with the welcoming speech of Dr G Reza Karirmi of the Iranian Ministry of Education

Dr G Reza Karimi
(Deputy Head, Centre for International Affairs and Schools Abroad,
Iranian Ministry of Education)

We have celebrated this year's EFA Global Action Week with a number of events from the beginning of the Week. The first such events was the roundtable organised by and held at the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO with the presence of education authorities, the UNESCO representative to Iran and Members to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament). Another event was held on Wednesday, 5 May at the Iranian Ministry of Education, which wrapped-up a workshop on journalism; this workshop was held in 12 sessions in 12 different schools each month. In the session which was held at the Ministry of Education students were awarded with certificates of attendance and prizes. Today, we have the last of the events organised for the EFA Global Action Week; this roundtable is mainly a question and answer session that is attended by education scholars.

In March 1990, the World Conference on Education for All (EFA): Meeting Basic Learning Needs, was held in Jomtien, Thailand. Participants to this conference reaffirmed the notion of education as a fundamental human right and urged countries to intensify efforts to address the basic learning needs of all.

Learning throughout life is also another concept that came into being before 2000 and was paid significant attention to by countries and international organisations. Subsequent to the adoption of the Dakar declaration issues of greater importance were included on the international education agenda, which led to the proclamation, by the UN, of the UNLD (United Nations Literacy decade, 2003-2012) and UNDESD (United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2015). From the outset the quality of education as one of the six major EFA goals was linked to education for sustainable development since quality and sustainability in education call for the adoption of a sustainable approach within the framework of development strategies. In line with the above, the Iranian Ministry of Education undertook extensive activities in the fields of quality education and education for sustainable development leading to the establishment of a secretariat to integrate environmental concepts into textbooks. Another concept which gains importance within the framework of quality education is inclusive education. Inclusive education is based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives.

Inclusive education is about enabling schools to serve all children (out of school, disabled, and working children, children belonging to minorities, ethnic and marginalised groups, etc). In line with achieving the EFA goals, the MDGs also focus on education, thus facilitating the path to the six EFA goals. Despite the various activities undertaken for enhancing the quality of education with most of them proving successful, many countries around the world are still experiencing grave problems in this trend. In Iran quantitative indicators have developed free of limit, but quality is an issue with regards to which we are still beginners in and must exert more effort in.

Finance is also a matter of significant international importance when it comes to achieving the EFA goals. Many a meeting has been held on this topic; the meetings of high-ranking education officials are an example. These meetings have considered EFA financial issues as top priority on their agenda. UNESCO has prepared within the past decade a number of 8 final reports on evaluating member states' activities and advancements in the field of EFA, some of which have been translated by the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and submitted to educational policy- and decision-makers at national level.

Our education indicators prove appropriate. The number of out of school children in Iran is decreased to reach 1 to 2 %; documented programmes are prepared to bring these children under educational coverage. Free education is made available to almost all in need of education. Still, what is important and is given extensive attention as top priority to is providing quality education and transmitting life skills to students. Eliminating illiteracy and promoting early childhood education are among issues requiring greater effort to be fulfilled. Up to this moment some 15% of the Country's population are illiterate; the Iranian Literacy Movement Organisation and other relevant organisations are acting within the framework of documented plans to help overcome this problem and reduce the number of illiterates in the country.

Mrs Ghorban from the Iranian Ministry of Education was the second speaker of this session.

Mrs Ghorban
(Deputy, Primary Education,
Iranian Ministry of Education)

The speaker referred to the following as activities carried out at country level for achieving the EFA goals:

- Establishment of a follow-up committee for EFA implementation in 2000 with the responsibility of the Ministry of Education;

- Establishing a national EFA task group under the supervision and responsibility of the Minister of Education;
- Inclusion of the EFA programme in the 5-year national development strategy of the 4th National Development Plan;
- Developing criteria for evaluating progress in implementation of the EFA programme at country level;
- Allocating paragraph (a) of item 52 of the 4th National Development Plan to the EFA programme;
- Allocating a special budget to EFA implementation at country level;
- Annual auditing of expenses made from the budget allocated to improving the quality of and access to education and evaluation of achievements in promoting EFA goals.

“The 5th National Development Plan includes a comprehensive plan for a structural and content-wise transformation of the national educational system,” explained Ms Ghorban. Structural reform was completed but to bring about changes in content, educational methods and programmes a national plan was documented. This plan sought to improve the quality of education by increasing students’ knowledge and skills, as well as their mental and physical health. Achieving gender parity is a goal of the 5th National Development Plan, an objective already achieved. This indicator underwent a rise from 3.5% to 34% in rural areas, indicating a considerable growth in rural areas.

Concerning the situation of education at primary level within the period 2000-2006, the speaker explained that the percentage of primary level students with pre-school education has seen an increase of 25%, rising from 18.4% to 43.5% in urban areas.

Moving on to educational indicators at primary level, these can be classified into quantitative and qualitative indicators. In respect to quantitative indicators, the net intake in first grade has risen from 92.8% to 95.3%, with the gross intake rising from 107 to 112 percents. This is an achievement in that we have managed to cover a greater number of out-of-school children. Within the same period, the net rate of enrolment, which is referred to as the real coverage has risen from 95.9% to 97.8% in urban settings, whereas the estimated coverage has undergone a decrease from 109% to 104%. The gross coverage for rural settings has reached 109% from a total of 126%.

Concerning qualitative indicators, the focus of our discussion, factors such as number of students per classroom, number of student per teacher and the rate of repeating each level has decreased significantly. The rates of success (pass rate) in each grade, and the percentage of qualified teachers are soaring. The number of students at primary level has undergone a decrease from 25 to 20 pupils per classroom; the ratio of students to teachers has reached 21 from a total of 25 with the rate of gender equality reaching 99% from 97% in the gross intake. Estimated coverage has increased from 95% to 98%, while the rate of success (pass rate) in first to fifth grade has increased from 88% to 91% in urban settings and from 76% to 80% in rural areas.

In relation to student progress, the rate of repeating educational levels is decreasing significantly; for instance in first grade the rate of failure has decreased to 4% from 7%, in second grade this rate reveals a decrease to 2.3% from a total of 4.5%, third grade reveals a cut on the failure rate of 2.7%, dropping it down to 1.5%, in fourth grade this rate is 1.16%, showing a considerable drop from the total of 2.92% and in fifth grade we have a decrease from 1.46% to 0.92%, all of which indicate a more ideal situation in the primary level.

Students' rate of staying-in-school and finishing a level has increased from 8.8% to 9.84%.

Despite all qualitative achievements, we are still far from international standards. Thus greater efforts are required to achieve quality education. Quantity-wise we have no problems. By expanding education to less-developed areas and among nomads, also by employing larger numbers of teachers, enhancing school intakes, we have managed to remove, to a large extent, the problems of quantity. Yet, in relation to quality, there are still steps to be taken. Examples of activities planned to be undertaken in this area are:

- Training courses for teachers and school principals;
- Empowering educational groups;
- Modifying and improving teaching methods;
- Improving the learning-teaching process, with special emphasis on increasing essential life skills acquisition by students; and
- Transforming classrooms from teacher-oriented to active participation.

Next to speak was Mr Qunli Han, UNESCO Representative to the IR of Iran and Director of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office. Mr Han's speech is summarised below.

Mr Qunli Han
(Director and Representative

UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office)

In relation to the Education for All programme, Mr Han explained that UNESCO seeks development, the spread of equity and human rights by means of its programme on Education for All. Here in Iran we are witness to significant achievements in the area of Education for All. EFA indicators are improved in Iran, but the country is still faced with a severe challenge which is the problem of achieving quality in education. Gender parity and educational access, a most significant challenge of our world, are also among improved indicators in Iran. Still, problems such as identification of out-of-school children, weakness in pre-primary (early childhood) education, shortcomings in adult and youth literacy and teaching life skills still persist in the Iranian educational system.

Concerning quality in education, UNESCO is ready to assist Iran in improving national educational programmes and the country's overall educational policies, and to direct the country's long-term educational plans for development. The UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office is also ready to lend a hand in this area. For this, we need reports from the Iranian Ministry of Education indicating their advances and shortcomings. Such information can help reveal the status of the Iranian educational system in comparison to other educational systems in the world.

Teachers are most important in efforts aimed at promoting quality; they must be further supported. Mechanisms and policies should be adopted to enhance teachers' teaching qualities; capacity-building in education is required; teaching methods must be updated and teachers must improve their knowledge and understanding of modern technologies. Teachers must earn more; they should have social dignity; they must be respected and should have job security. In the light of the above, teachers will quit less. UNESCO has an international institute for educational planning, which focuses mostly on school health and other relevant issues. We want you to ask for information, subsequent to which we will provide you with the information required.

Subsequent to Mr Han, the floor was taken by Mr Alahyari from the Iranian Ministry of Education.

Mr Alahyari
Deputy Directorate for Planning and Strategic Supervision of the Presidential Office

This year's theme for the EFA Global Action Week is *Financing Quality Public Education: A Right for All*. Quality is an indispensable constituent of any educational system and defined by the educational system. The main constituents of our educational system are human resources, educational space and content and learning-

teaching methods. The overall quality of each of these constituents is dependent on the outcome of the educational system.

In relation to human resources quality, enhancing teachers' knowledge and improving managerial methods is recommended. Quality in educational space calls for a full recognition of international standards and conformity with physical and regional conditions of students in different geographical areas. In regards to the financial resources, accessibility, timeliness, sufficiency, being goal-oriented and conformity with an appropriate structure that has undergone necessary reforms, is most important. A significant part of the county's regular budget is allocated to education now, yet the inherent budgetary deficit in this area has education confronted with a constant challenge thus creating an obstacle in the path to achieving determined goals. 95% of the total 114 billion-dollar budget allocated to education is used for the workforces who are active in this area. The Ministry of Education is trying to overcome its qualitative and quantitative challenges with only the remaining 5% of the budget. In addition to the EFA programme, there are other programmes also foreseen to be implemented by and within the framework of the 5th National Development Plan.

We exercise a variety of methods for pooling financial resources:

- Educational expenses are fully covered by the Government;
- Educational expenses are fully covered by the non-governmental sector;
- Educational expenses are covered by both the Governmental and non-governmental sectors (this happens in the case of a bilateral educational system);

We have no clear strategies adopted in this area. We now have an organisation for non-governmental, non-profit schools at the Ministry of Education; this is a newly established entity that requires new strategies and planning for. According to principle thirty of the Constitution, it is necessary for the Ministry of Education to adopt clear-cut strategies for allocating budget and social publicising is also required, to gather an appropriate report of viewpoints on this subject. Budget deficit in education ministries around the world is a popular problem. According to information and statistics released by UNESCO, education ministries are suffering from a 5 billion dollar budget deficit in developing countries. Bearing on World Bank reports and good practices in budget allocation for education purposes, I would like to propose a triangular model, one which has proven successful in many countries. In this triangle one side focuses mainly on structural change, strategies for using resources and implementation methods corresponding to each section. Should we consider education a triangle, one side of this triangle will focus on adopting a school/class-oriented strategy. This strategy will be adopted based on recommendations by the Education Commission of the Islamic

Consultative Assembly. Adopting such a strategy is a most important means of improving and promoting appropriate methods for providing financial resources. The second side of this triangle focuses on adopting a financial strategy of supply and demand. Providing financial resources now is a bilateral strategy with one side dealing with meeting demands and the other focusing on supplies. In Iran, budget is allocated to supply, i.e. the whole budget goes to the Ministry of Education which in turn allocates the received amount to various purposes within its executive entities. This method is good in itself, but it is not needs-based, thus making it inflexible when required. This calls for a change of strategy from supply to demand. The third side of the mentioned triangle focuses on public-private contribution.

I would wrap up by explaining that in the light of the decreasing student population, the time is now ripe for the Iranian Ministry of Education to move towards adopting a new financial strategy. Estimations show that the increasing population of students in coming years would deprive the Ministry of Education from any possibility of overcoming existing obstacles since the number of people that are not under cover of education will increase and the literacy movement will have an ever-increasing number of clients. Unfortunately, our planning methods are still quantitative. Our programmes lack the required clarity in that the policy directions are not yet fully clarified by the 4th National Development Plan. Our strategies must be needs-oriented. Our country still lacks such programming. In connection to the EFA programme and associated areas, we now have a defined budget. For instance, in relation to improving students' nutritional status, providing students with their defined quota of bread and milk, providing food for boarding-school children, providing stationary and notebooks for students in deprived areas, improving teachers' professional qualities, improving textbooks and educational content, providing easy and cheaper access to textbooks, etc. we now have a regular defined budget. We have considered certain programmes for changing learning-teaching methods, changing the national examination system, improving teacher's living standards and income for a higher employment satisfaction rate, improving students' programmes in physical education and health services and standardising educational space all of which call for the allocation of appropriate financial resources.

The Meeting continued with the speech of Mr Mehdizadeh from the Iranian Literacy Movement Organisation on activities undertaken by this Organisation to promote EFA at the country level.

Mr Mehdizadeh
Advisor, Literacy Movement Organisation

In relation to activities implemented by the Iranian Literacy Movement Organisation in the field of EFA, Mr Mehdizadeh explained that, “the LMO has tried from the beginning to achieve education for all and has adopted relevant policies in this trend.” LMO’s activities are mainly focused on the under-50 age group and this has been evaluated as a successful policy of the Organisation. An important objective of the LMO is achieving gender parity. We have thus managed to decrease the differences in the rate of literacy between men and women. Another policy of the Organisation is promoting literacy in rural areas. Most of our activities are thus carried out in rural areas. A priority of ours is to deploy staff and allocate budget to rural areas. Our focus has initially been on basic education and we have set our priority on achieving the least possible level of literacy, i.e. basic education for all. Limitations prevented us from investing in higher levels. But now we are after achieving both basic and complementary education for all. An activity that proved most successful in the past years was planning for a thanksgiving celebration; we managed to save around 10 000 villages from illiteracy. The literacy rate of the under-50 age group has reached 97% in these villages for which we organised thanksgiving celebrations. These areas are no longer in need of the activities of the LMO and we are now moving to certain other provinces including Yazd, Semnan, Qom and Qazvin. Our work load is increasing and our activities are soaring. In the light of greater effort we managed to raise the number of learners to one million and four hundred thousand pupils within the past couple of years. Official figures have it that the period 2000 to 2006 has seen a considerable growth in promoting literacy among the illiterates. Illiteracy within the over-15 age group has decreased to 18% from a total of 23% in 2006. Women’s illiteracy rate has reached 23% from a total of 30%. Illiteracy rate among men has decreased to 15% from a total of 17%. In 2000 the difference between women and men’s literacy rates has been 13% whereas this difference has decreased to 8% in 2006. From a regional point of view the rate of illiteracy has reached 12% in 2006 from a total amount of 16% in 2000. Rural illiteracy has decreased to 30% in 2006 from a total amount of 37% in 2000. Within the past 6-7 years two action plans have been written for the LMO. One such action plan was developed and proposed to the LMO by the 4th National Development Plan and the second was drafted within the framework of the EFA Action Plan. Fortunately, we were successful in implementing both plans. For example in 2006 the programme for promoting literacy had foreseen to cover one million and twenty eight thousand people and the second programme which dealt with education for all had foreseen to cover a number of one million and two hundred and twenty individuals and we proved

successful in both programmes since we managed to achieve a total coverage of one million and four hundred and seventy five thousand pupils.

Under-progress programmes of the LMO are summarised as below:

- Promoting and focusing on thanksgiving celebrations;
- Developing and enhancing the literacy system to identify illiterates and low-literates;
- Preparing time tables to eradicate all illiteracy in the under-50 age group; and
- Structural changes in and reorganising the LMO.

Last speaker of the Session was Dr Abdolazim Karimi, who briefed the Session on PIRLS and TIMSS in Iran.

Mr Abdolazim Karimi
National Coordinator for PIRLS and TIMSS in Iran

Iran became a member to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), an NGO in charge of comparative studies in educational achievement, in the 90s. The IEA has conducted tens of international research studies including TIMSS and PIRLS projects.

TIMSS evaluates trends in Mathematics and Science studies while PIRLS is an assessment of the Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study. In Iran TIMSS is conducted within the period from 4th grade to the end of the lower secondary level and PIRLS is conducted from 4th grade onwards. Up to now, TIMSS has been conducted four times once every four years (1995, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011(upcoming)). PIRLS is conducted once every five years (2001, 2006 and 2011(upcoming)). Coincidentally, 2011 will see to the organisation of both TIMSS and PIRLS, thus providing countries with the opportunity of synchronically evaluating trends in Mathematics and Science studies achievements as well as Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study. Here in Iran we have TIMSS conducted in 4th grade and the end of the lower secondary level, whereas PIRLS is only conducted in 4th grade. 2011 thus provides Iran with the opportunity of assessing students' reading literacy in addition to students' trends in Mathematics and Science achievements. This becomes even more important since reading is the key to all learning. Even children with problems in Science and Mathematics may well be suffering from reading illiteracy. Up to now more than 60 countries around the world have taken part in the TIMSS and PIRLS tests. Each cycle sees an increase in the number of participating countries. Today, TIMSS and PIRLS are considered as an international indicator for

countries' practical orientation and achievements in the two basic courses of Science and Mathematics as well as in students' reading literacy. Unfortunately, in all cycles of the tests, Iran has proven itself lower than international standards. Yet, we have had significant progress in science compared to other countries. TIMSS outcomes have been used to modify science textbooks and teaching methods. Mathematics though is our pitfall and we are experiencing a kind of backwardness in this area. TIMSS 1995 tested three target groups: 4th and 5th primary level, 2nd and 3rd lower secondary level and 2nd and 3rd upper secondary level students. In 1995, Iran took part in the primary and lower secondary levels of TIMSS; we avoided advanced TIMSS that was conducted for upper secondary level students. Advanced TIMSS is conducted once every twelve years. Last year was host to advanced TIMSS for which post- secondary non-tertiary Iranian students were selected as sample group to participate in the test. Fortunately, we acted well in Mathematics. We ranked mid among tens of countries most of which were European states and we stood higher than Italy and Norway on the list. In TIMSS 2007 and PIRLS 2006 our students acted fairly well compared with previous years. An increase by 55 scores was seen in our students' operation in sciences in 2007 compared to their results obtained in 1995. Students' operation in basic sciences in the educational level of 3rd lower secondary grade showcased an increase by 11 scores in 2007 compared to their results obtained in 1995. Iranian 4th graders showed an increase in their Mathematics competence by 15 scores in 2007 compared to their results obtained in 1995. Unfortunately, though, Iranian lower secondary 3rd graders revealed a falling competence by 15 scores in Mathematics in 2007 compared to their results obtained in 1995. Iran's status was below standard in the periodical tests of both TIMSS (1995-2007) and PIRLS (2001 and 2006) with the mid operation of 4th graders and 3rd lower secondary grade students in providing correct responses to science questions calculated as 30%. The percentage of providing correct responses to relevant questions in PIRLS 2007 has been 45. In the whole four cycles of TIMSS the 5 Asian countries of Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Singapore have always been in a pioneering position holding a meaningful gap with other countries altogether triggering the question of, "How is it that South East Asia has always dominated the top in all these years? This is not a coincidence; it is the result of hard work and efficient planning.

Effective success factors for countries mentioned above are classified as below:

- Attention to the role of teaching and teachers and teaching them teaching skills;
- Teachers' efficiency and work experience;
- Optimism in teaching;
- Keeping human development, gross national income, access to technical educational facilities and health and welfare indicators in high levels;

- Conformity of the economic, social and cultural aspects of the society with results obtained by students;
- Less-populated classrooms;
- Allocating greater time to basic education, to enhance learning and bring about educational progress.

It is noteworthy that boys have participated more effectively in TIMSS in the area of Mathematics compared to girls, but in Iran in 2007 girls have shown a more effective participation in the field of Mathematics.

A closing question and answer session wrapped-up the Meeting

ANNEXES



Iranian National Commission for UNESCO
May 2010

ANNEX I

Agenda of Session I

**“EFA Global Action Week”
Roundtable on Challenges of Quality Education
Tehran-IR of Iran
20 April 2010**

Venue: Iranian National Commission for UNESCO

Speaker	Topic	Time
Dr M Reza Saeidabadi Secretary General, Iranian National Commission for UNESCO	Significance and necessity of the EFA Global Programme	14:00-14:15
Dr Dogani Representative and Member to the Commission for Education and Research of the Islamic Consultative Assembly	Policy-making in Quality Education and Adopting Preventive Measures against Drop-out in Iran	14:15-14:35
Mr Qunli Han Director and Representative, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and Dr G Reza Samarbakhsh Programme Officer for Education, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office	UNESCO Policies and Programmes on School Drop-Outs	14:35-15:00
Mr Manouchehr Fazlikhani Representative, Supreme Council for Education	Policies and Strategies of the Supreme Council for Education in Relation to the EFA Programme	15:00-15:20
Dr Moharam Aghazadeh University Professor and Advisor to UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office in Education	Challenges of Quality Education in Iran	15:20-15:50
Question and Answer		15:50-16:45
Tea/Coffee Break		16:45-17:00

ANNEX II

Agenda of Session II

“EFA Global Action Week”

**Roundtable on
Advancements in Promoting the EFA Programme:
Quality Education from the Standpoint of Sustainable development
Tehran-IR of Iran
26 April 2010**

Venue: Centre for International Affairs and Schools Abroad

Programme	Time
Recitation of the Holy Quran	9:00-9:05
Speeches	9:05-11:20
Dr G Reza Karimi Deputy Head, Centre for International Cooperation and International Schools, Iranian Ministry of Education	9:05-9:15
Ms Ghorban Deputy, Primary Education, Iranian Ministry of Education	9:15-9:40
Mr Qunli Han Director and Representative, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office	9:40-10:00
Mr Alahyari Deputy Directorate for Planning and Strategic Supervision of the Presidential Office	10:00-10:30
Mr Mehdizadeh Advisor to the Literacy Movement Organisation	10:30-11:00
Mr Abdolazim Karimi National Coordinator for PIRLS and TIMSS in Iran	11:00-11:20
Question and Answer	11:20-12:30

ANNEX III

List of Participants by Representing Organisation (both sessions)

Iranian National Commission for UNESCO

Dr M Reza Saeidabadi, Secretary General

Dr Moheb Hosseini, Head of Education Department

Dr D Kiani, Head of Social and Human Sciences Department

Dr F Eteamdi, Head of Communication Department

Ms Z Pourhadi, Programme Assistant for Education

Ms A Rahimi, Senior Programme Assistant for Communication

Mr S M Taghaddos, Programme Assistant for Science

UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office

Dr Qunli Han, Director and Representative, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office

Dr G Reza Samarbakhsh, Programme Officer for Education

Ms F Zarrabi, Assistant Programme Officer for Education

Dr M Aghazadeh, University Professor and Advisor to UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office in Education

Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament)

Dr Dogani, Representative and Member to the Commission for Education and Research of the Islamic Consultative Assembly

Ministry of Education and Associated Entities

Mr M Fazlikhani, Representative, Supreme Council for Education

Dr G Reza Karimi, Deputy Head, Centre for International Cooperation and International Schools

Ms Ghorban, Deputy for Primary Education of the Iranian Ministry of Education

Mr Mehdizadeh, Advisor to the Literacy Movement Organisation

Mr A Karimi, National Coordinator for PIRLS and TIMSS in Iran

Mr H Khalasi

Mr S K Sadati, Tehran Province Bureaus for Education

Mr H Nemati, Deputy Directorate for Primary Education of the Iranian Ministry of Education

Mr F Nabi, Centre for International Affairs and Schools Abroad

Ms Sh Hosseinpour, Education Research Centre

Mr M Nejatbakhsh, Deputy Directorate for Primary Education of the Iranian Ministry of Education

Mr A Hakimi, Education Research Centre

Ms F Bozorg Sarabi, Centre for International Affairs and Schools Abroad

Ms M Bahirae, Centre for International Affairs and Schools Abroad

Ms S Sayfi, Tehran Area 1 Education Bureau

Ms F Baygi, Deputy for Primary Education, General Directorate, Tehran Province Bureaus of Education

Ms M Daneshvar, Centre for Research and Educational Planning

Mr T Abeli, Mellard Education Bureau

Mr F Ayenehvand, Mellard Education Bureau, Hashtroudi School

Ms R Shahbazi, Tehran Area 4 Education Bureau, Velayat School

Ms M Ahmadiyeh, Tehran Area 4 Education Bureau, Velayat School

Mr A Khakzad, Literacy Movement Organisation

Mr M Taheri, Organisation for Research and Planning in Education

Mr M Sayfi, Tehran Area 3 Education Bureau, Sobhan High School

Ms S Ziaee, Organisation for Exceptional Education

Mr G R Bakhtiari, Tehran Province Bureaus for Education

Mr H Fallah, Tehran Province Bureaus for Education

Mr S Fahllah, Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Education

Ms R Jafari, Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Education

Mr A Taymouri, Tehran Area4 Education Bureau

Mr A Taleghaninia, Tehran Area 4 Education Bureau, Shahid Motahari Lower Secondary School

Mr V Yaqubi, Centre for International Affairs and Schools Abroad

Mr A Rahmatzadeh, Bureau for Health

Mr M Chinian, Deputy Director, Bureau for Health

Ms H Shams, Dr Hesabi Primary School

Mr N Haydarveiss, Bureau for Distance Education

Mr M J Mohseninia, Deputy Directorate for Planning and Strategic Supervision of the Iranian Ministry of Education

Mr H Hamdami, Bureau for Programme and Budget

Mr S M Tabatabaee, National Organisation for the Training of Special Talents

Mr F Saberi, Bureau for Non-Profit Schools

Mr S R Forootan, Centre for Technology, Statistics and Education

Mr M Osouli, Cultural-Educational Complex of Vali-e Asr

Mr A M Vali, Cultural-Educational Complex of Vali-e Asr

Mr S M Ghofrani, National Technical and Vocational Organisation

Ms Z Parvin, Iman Primary School

Ms Sh Kheirandish, Edalat Primary School

Ms E Sadraei, Farzanegan Primary School

Ms M Akbari, Tehran Province Bureaus for Education

Ministry of Science, Research and Technology

Dr F Talebi, Director General for Educational Planning, University of Applied Science and Technology

Mr G R Ghorbani, Institute for Planning and Research in Higher Education

Mr K Shirvani, Organisation for Industrial and Scientific Research

Mr A Mirzapour, National Research Institute for Science Policy

Other

Mr Alahyari, Deputy Directorate for Planning and Strategic Supervision of the Presidential Office

Ms N Nourshahi, Representative, UNESCO Chair in Management, Planning and Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Iran

Mr M A Mohagheghi, Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education

Mr H Fekrazad, University of Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Iranian Ministry of Health and welfare

Mr I Samari, Deputy Directorate for Planning, Presidential Office

Ms M Chegini, High School of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms J Moghimi, High School of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr H Shafiee, Journalist