

# **Executive Summary 12<sup>th</sup> Japan Education Forum (JEF XII)**

## **-Collaboration toward Self-Reliant Educational Development-**

### **Outline of the Forum**

The Japan Education Forum (JEF) is an annual international forum established in March 2004 through governmental and academic collaboration as part of Japan's educational cooperation. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for open and frank exchanges of opinions and ideas by officials in the public sector, practitioners of international development and NGOs, and scholars on ways of promoting self-efforts of developing countries toward sustainable educational development and of effective international cooperation in education. The forum also offers an opportunity to present Japan's own experiences in educational development and its international cooperation in practice. This year's topic was "Education for All (EFA): What have been achieved and future challenges beyond 2015; reviewing educational development cooperation", and invited discussion post-2015 challenges in achieving EFA. The forum is jointly organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Hiroshima University and the University of Tsukuba. The event is also supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

This year JEF XII was held in the Plaza Heisei, Tokyo International Exchange Center on February 5, 2015 in Tokyo. In accordance with the theme, the forum focused on achievements made, pressing issues and challenges to the EFA goals from the viewpoints of developing countries, civil society, researchers, donors and international organizations. In the morning, two featured keynote speakers addressed the assembly. The first keynote speaker, Eshetu Asfaw, Director of Plan and Resources Mobilization Directorate, Ministry of Education, Ethiopia was followed by a keynote speech from Aaron Benavot, Director of EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO. A question and answer session followed in which the audience could discuss the issues freely with the keynote speakers. The afternoon featured a panel session which presented multiple viewpoints on "EFA experiences and future challenges post 2015" and "future prospects of international cooperation in education." The event concluded with an open floor discussion among all of the speakers followed by concluding discussions from the keynote speakers and panelists. In total, more than 90 people participated in the forum including diplomats from many foreign embassies, various ministry officials, development cooperation agency representatives, university faculty members and students, NGO/NPOs, and the general public.

### **Keynote Speech by Eshetu Asfaw (Director, Plan and Resources Mobilization Directorate, Ministry of Education, Ethiopia)**

Mr. Eshetu had a keynote speech entitled "Education for All: what has been achieved and future challenges beyond 2015; experiences from Ethiopia" Ethiopia has made great progress in increasing access to primary education, with a gross enrolment ratio (GER) from 26% in 1994 to 97% in 2014, expanding facilities with a primary focus on rural areas. The number of schools has grown from 7,900 in 1985 to 35,380 in 2014, providing education for school-age children without delay, reaching a net enrolment ratio (NER) of 89 % in 2014, and promoting great gender equity in girls' access to schooling, with a gender parity index from 0.66 in 1991 to 0.94 in 2013. Mr. Eshetu argued that such progress represents great achievements, considering the civil war they experienced and that children's education cannot be achieved without parental awareness of the importance of education. He further pointed out four important factors that have pushed Ethiopia's progress, which are sustained government commitment in terms of both, policy and expenditure; promotion of decentralization for effective education services and reflecting local needs; promotion of strong community participation in education; and, acceleration of effective development cooperation through Education Sector Development Plans. Inasmuch as there are more than three million vulnerable out-of-school children, Mr. Eshetu concluded his speech by

emphasizing the necessity of tackling familiar concerns of access, equity and quality issues regarding education as Ethiopia's post-2015 challenges requiring new and improved working strategies in order to provide all children with equitable access to a quality education, identifying the significance of filling gender and regional gaps in enrolment, reducing dropouts and promoting community engagement in education.

### **Keynote Speech by Aaron Benavot, Director, EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO**

Dr. Benavot offered an overview of the history of global EFA efforts, progress in achieving the six EFA goals, and international aid for EFA policies. Firstly, examining the Dakar EFA agenda and an assessment of its impact 15 years later, he argued that the Dakar EFA goals and education goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed upon in 2000 came to be more narrowly defined to address learning goals. After having assessed progress and lessons learned, they are now combined under the umbrella of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This is because the evidence of EFA progress showed that while the number of out-of-school children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age decreased from 204 million in 1999 to 121 million in 2012, the progress has been uneven. The areas to be further emphasized require targeting disadvantaged children, completion of primary education, transferring post-primary students to secondary education, bringing about the opportunity to participate in the labor market, improving adult literacy, training teachers and improving learning outcomes for quality education, as well as improving domestic finance in education. Furthermore, in the trends in aid to education, basic education has attracted donors, with the majority of funding focused on primary education with its share of 92% in 2010-12, while basic life skills training for youth and adults and early childhood education decreased to, respectively, 3% and 2% in 2010-12, despite donors showing commitment to strong support for early childhood care and education. Dr. Benavot reminded the floor that the Dakar Framework called on donors to not just increase aid levels but also to improve aid effectiveness. There are some lessons learned for the post-2015 agenda: Firstly, merging education priorities with broad development priorities; that, aligning post-EFA goals with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. Secondly, embarking on open consultation to improve concept definition and clarification, which requires linking targets to clear and measurable indicators and therefore to improved data sources and coordination. Finally, the international community needs a universal agenda to increase political will, and policies should be meaningful, relevant, ambitious and transformative. After explaining formulation of SDG targets on education, Dr. Benavot concluded his speech by arguing that SDG education goal and targets place greater emphasis on access to all levels of education, outcomes like basic learning and skill acquisition, equity and links with wider sustainable development priorities, and also that the international community needs widespread consensus involving many more actors, over the needs to establish an independent monitoring and assessment mechanism to compile and analyze expanded data in education and to promote evidence based policy making.

At the conclusion of both keynote speeches, a question and answer session was held. Questions were received from audience participants of Japan and Bangladesh and those from NPOs. Topics included mainly how to improve quality education such as language issues in education, curriculum development, finance, partnerships and how to evaluate education outcomes.

### **Panel Session**

A panel session was held in the afternoon under the themes of "EFA experiences and future challenges post 2015" and "future prospects of international cooperation in education". Kazuo Kuroda, Professor of Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies and Director of Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education, Waseda University served as a moderator for this session. Four panelists provided the audience with first-hand reports of EFA experiences and future challenges from global perspectives to local efforts. Panelists represented Human Development Department, JICA, Kenyatta University, Kenya, Universidade Federal de Sao Carlos, Brazil

and Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).

Shinichi Ishihara, Deputy Director General of the Human Development Department, JICA, began the session by pointing out universal primary education, gender parity and quality of education as the remaining challenges for EFA and MDG education goals. He emphasized the importance of targeting children in conflict-affected areas, girls from poor rural households and children with disabilities. Stress was also placed on the significance of improving quality of education, arguing that 30% of children who enter primary schools do not complete primary education in developing countries, and 250 million children out of the population of 650 million school-aged children do not have basic skills. JICA has contributed not only to improving access to primary education through constructing over 10,085 schools and 72,881 class rooms in 50 countries since 1990, but also to improving the quality of primary education through mathematics and science education, lesson study and improving school-based management, as well as assisting non-formal education and literacy education. Mr. Ishihara stressed that in order to improve quality of learning, JICA continues to take comprehensive approaches to strengthening links among curriculum and textbooks, lessons, learning and assessment, and combining improvement of human resources, policy, the learning environment and the education system. With regard to the post-2015 agenda, Mr. Ishihara further discussed the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning beyond basic education. He described an approach shift from a vertical relationship between developed and developing countries to horizontal relationship beyond borders and regions. Emphasizing the benefits of global mutual learning, such as regional cooperation and collaboration between scholars in academia and practitioners in field sites and policy makers across the globe, Mr. Ishihara concluded his presentation by discussing JICA's post-2015 perspective which promotes education projects aimed at maximizing outcomes with multiplier effects by collaborating with other sectors beyond education, since education contributes to improving other goals and sectors including health, environmental and industrial development.

Fatuma Chege, Dean of the School of Education at Kenyatta University in Kenya, was the second presenter, and her address focused on gender equality and equity in primary and secondary education in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR). Addressing the multiple overlapping of various inequalities, such as ethnicity, class, poverty, regions and disability, Prof. Chege indicated the prerequisites for gender equality action in education. These essential conditions include awareness, knowledge, skill and relevant attitudes, strategic planning, gender policies and budgeting, content rationalization, monitoring and evaluation, and transparency and accountability. Since every community has a different history, we need to appreciate the complexity and gender dynamics involved in such a task. An overview of education in the ESAR shows that GER is relatively well (boys:113%, girls:107%) and many ESAR countries steadily narrowed the gender gap from 2000 to 2010. However, looking at gender inequality in details, there are many serious issues. For example, there are cases in which boys have different challenges within and outside school, such as engaging in work including motorbike transport industry in rural and urban settings and rice paddies to assist their parents in Kenya. To the contrary, in Africa, adolescent girls continue to "fall through the cracks" due to persistent challenges, such as cultural rites of passage, early marriage and pregnancy, sexual and other forms of gender-based violence and devaluation of female schooling. Prof. Chege emphasized the need to localize the issues so that we can tackle them. She also noted that persistent poverty is a challenge to education in ESAR, as well as effects of war and civil strife on education. In conclusion, Prof. Chege addressed what needs to be done in the post-2015 era. She stressed the importance of governments' support in multi-sectoral synergizing of educational programming. She emphasized the need for a gender focus and life cycle approach for education, health and protection of girls and boys, as well as implementation of monitoring in local and country gender policies and legislations together with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children.

Yukiko Yamamoto Baldin, Professor of Universidade Federal de Sao Carlos, Brazil, continued the discussion by focusing on the professional development of teachers for quality education in Brazil. In Brazil,

while 92% of basic education aged children are enrolled, the students' achievement of the competencies in content knowledge is below the National Plan of Education goals. Students scored poorly on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), ranking 57<sup>th</sup> among 64 participating countries. Reflecting on the curriculum of traditional teacher education courses, Prof. Baldin argued the importance of focusing on linking discipline mathematics to classroom practices, integrating ICT in teaching techniques, shifting the paradigm from teacher-centered to participative learning, and diversifying topics of contemporary mathematics for the enrichment of cultural knowledge. Considering the recent demand for professional development courses to support teachers, she further suggested that workshops consisting of training procedures and theoretical seminars are not sufficient. Teachers need to be continuously educated and that didactical materials must be developed for teachers to learn new approaches and modern mathematical ideas to enhance their lesson plans. In addition, teachers should reinterpret their knowledge of mathematics in the school curriculum with the language, and evaluate the advantages and limitations of technology, and need to bridge the gap between existing classroom practices and the specific needs of modern time. Introducing her field experiences of lesson study practices to the audience, Prof. Baldin concluded that the mission of teacher educators and researchers of mathematics education is to provide all children with the opportunity to achieve basic mathematics ability through problem solving. She also emphasized that countries with different historical, social and cultural backgrounds can collaborate to learn from each other to overcome the complex problems of mathematics education of teachers.

The final presentation of the session, "Financing Education: Trend and Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region", was made by Rene Raya, Lead Policy Analyst of Asian South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). Mr. Raya discussed that the fast growing economic region faces serious challenges in education in terms of access, literacy, equity, gender parity and financing. The Asia-Pacific region comprises the largest number of adult illiterates - 64% of the global total. There are 17.8 million out-of-school children, and over 100 million youth, from 15 to 24 years old who have not completed primary education. Two thirds of adult illiterates are women, and more girls are out of school than boys. Financing is one of the key factors in these challenges, considering that the Asia-Pacific region spends less on education than the other regions, and their expenditures do not meet UNESCO's recommended benchmark of 6% of the GNP. This has a significant impact on poor and vulnerable groups, thus, widening the existing inequality and creating social tensions. Furthermore, Mr. Raya pointed out that the scale of ODA for education has decreased, stating that Japan, one of the largest aid providers is one of the lowest relative to its GNI. Issues of quality of ODA include large portions for scholarship and imputed costs and excessive focus on formal education, while de-emphasizing non-formal education, adult learning and literacy. He went on to discuss the recent movements towards privatization, such as the rise of low fee private schools, expansion of public-private partnership initiatives and private tutoring, and the emerging corporate chain schools. Mr. Raya concluded his presentation by making an appeal for supporting a strong commitment for encouraging post-2015 education agenda at the World Education Forum in May 2015 in Korea. He stressed the importance of including the area of concrete financing targets, donors' increasing support for the Global Partnership for Education, and innovative financing that ensures equity, promotes the right to education and strengthens the public education system.

After the panel session, Prof. Kazuo Kuroda moderated an open floor discussions and question and answer session with the panelists. Questions were taken from participants representing various NGOs/NPOs in Japan, as well as a student and scholars. Topics addressed were education and legislation, unemployment issues, financing and public-private partnership.

At the end of the afternoon, Prof. Kuroda again moderated a concluding discussion with the panelists and keynote speakers to summarize the day's main points and to challenge the audience to reflect upon them sincerely. In conclusion, Prof. Riho Sakurai, Hiroshima University stressed the importance of promoting the self-reliant educational development with not a vertical, but a horizontal approach, to tackle post-2015 agenda. In this way,

the 12<sup>th</sup> Japan Education Forum on collaboration toward self-reliant educational development provided a venue for thought provoking discussion on what should be done in the future to enhance quality education for all as an international community.