

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION in ACTIONAID

OVERVIEW REPORT OF THE YEAR 2004

Accountability, Mobilisation and Transformation in Education

30 ActionAid participants from 15 countries participated in a one-week workshop in November 2004 facilitated by IEU to look at accountability, mobilisation and transformation in education. Six countries did detailed preparatory studies and the workshop planned out cross-country action research work over the coming two years. This was the pivotal workshop for planning the 3 inter-linked special projects outlined in our 3 year plan for the Banyan Tree Foundation.

\$2-3 billion for girls education: probable G8 commitments linked to IFF / FTI

We worked with many allies in the GCE to put pressure on the global community to make progress on mobilising funding for education. Through the latter part of 2004 it became clear that we are in a good position now to ensure that one of the key announcements in the G8 meeting hosted by the UK next year will be \$2-3 billion a year for girls education – mobilised by UK, France and Canada through the International Financing Facility and channelled through the so-called “Fast Track Initiative”. This is something we have been calling for with the Global Campaign for Education over five years and could represent a major breakthrough.

EC approve 4 million euros for STAR: Reflect and Stepping Stones

Following on the footsteps of £350,000 from Comic Relief for action research on the doubly-innovative approach STAR (drawing on two of AA’s most successful innovative approaches: Reflect and Stepping Stones), we have now received 4 million euros for scaling up the approach in 7 countries (Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Malawi, Sierra Leone) – spreading to a further 21 countries.

EC Grant for education work

We secured 1 million Euros from the EU as a block grant to support education campaigning and Reflect work in Laos, Vietnam, Nepal, Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Brazil and Guatemala (all countries that fall outside the CEF).

Global research on benchmarks of good practice on adult literacy

The UNESCO based “Education For All Global Monitoring Report” (the definitive annual study on progress on EFA) have commissioned ActionAid and the Global campaign for Education to do research on benchmarks of good practice in adult literacy over the coming 3 months (for £33,000 – more than double the largest research grant they have ever made). Yaikah Jeng, a researcher from The Gambia is leading this work with David Archer and a Research Coordination Team in 8 countries. The survey has gone out to leading government and NGO literacy programmes in 50 countries with a view to developing definitive statements about good practice in adult literacy (based on initial ideas that have arisen from Reflect practice). It is hoped that this work will help to revitalise the UN Literacy Decade – and an advocacy planning session is planned with Unesco to take this forward.

Moderating E-Discussion on the MDGs

In the middle of the year ActionAid partnered with One World South Asia (who hosted the web-based discussion and provided technical support), the Commonwealth Education Fund and the Global Campaign on Education (both of whom provided outreach to its global constituency) to facilitate a global e-discussion with 1,500 participants about the MDG Task Force Reports on Gender and Education. These e-discussions were in English, Spanish and French and led to significant revisions to the Task Force reports. This work helped us develop clear positions on the MDGs to take to the MDG Summit in 2005.

New analysis of how IMF conditions affect education + 5 country studies

Akanksha Marphatia has done a new study for IEU / EWG on the impact of the IMF on education – and new studies have been commissioned from 5 ActionAid country programmes. The aim is to make strategic links with HIV and health campaigners in 2005 to show how IMF ideology and fundamentalism around macro-economic stability block progress on the MDGs.

Violence against Girls in schools: poster and briefing

A major workshop in May brought together education and gender staff around the theme: violence against girls in schools. 12 countries did background research on this and contributed papers which led to a briefing and a bold poster based on a “girl’s charter” being produced for use in the 16 days of activism between 25th November and 10th December. This close work with the gender working group of ActionAid is seen as a priority for the future – especially in the build up to the 2005 MDG Summit.

HIV and education: new working group paper and report for UNAIDS / UNESCO

Two briefing papers have been produced on “Addressing Educational needs of Orphan and Vulnerable Children” and on “Life skills for HIV education: a critical analysis”. ActionAid has played a lead role on education and HIV in the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. A report “Deadly Intertia” to be published by UNAIDS and UNESCO and GCE has been compiled by Tania Boler based on research with education and HIV coalitions in 20 countries. Good progress is being made on Education Positive – a book based on testimonies.

Global Campaign for Education: Future structure / World Assembly / Action

Major progress has been made in agreeing the future structure and direction of the GCE – the key global alliance on education - linking NGOs and unions. David was asked by the GCE Board to consult with all founding agencies and key members to develop a strategy paper for the future of GCE outlining both internal and external directions. This was a complex juggling of different interests but led to a major breakthrough with agreement to move the global secretariat to Jo’burg and expand the core team from 2 people to 7 people. The World Assembly in December, with participants from 57 countries, agreed the new strategic direction and position papers on 10 key issues. The GCE Global Week of Action in 2004 involved mobilisation of education activists in 117 countries. ActionAid’s education unit compiled the publication celebrating and documenting this week of action, titled “Missing an Education”.

Commonwealth Education Fund: Mid term review underway in 17 countries

Work is underway in 17 countries to do a mid-term review of progress of CEF – which will lead to adjustments in strategic plans over the coming 2/3 years up to the end date of the fund (March 2007). Strategic plans for sustainability of CEF have been developed. A major event was held with potential donors and supporters at 11 Downing Street, hosted by Gordon Brown – with Eddie George (former governor of the Bank of England) feeding back from a CEF arranged visit to India.

Education in emergencies

The year ended with the Tsunami and a rapid response from the education team who received news within a few days that displaced people in the Andaman Islands were demanding education as their number one priority. During the year AA had contributed in various locations to the consultations over developing the minimum guidelines under the INEE framework. We sought to reinforce these and initiated an immediate communication with the ten biggest INGOs involved to share education responses and ensure coordination.

Influencing other NGOs

A powerpoint presentation about the evolution of ActionAid's education work was developed to influence our own practice and that of other NGOs. Close dialogue was developed with the new education heads in CARE (Marilyn) and SCF US (Chloe) – leading to plans for joint events in March at the CIES conference. In a similar vein, we advised the Hewlett Foundation on how they should develop a global education programme – through teleconferences, e-mail and one face to face meeting.

Reaching out to academics: World Comparative Education Conference in Cuba

David Archer and Chike Anyanwu from CEF went to Cuba to speak about civil society campaigning on education with 1,200 academics from 50 countries. Their paper will be published in a journal in 2005.

Independently evaluating the World Bank's investment in education:

David Archer has been invited to join a four person external panel to independently review the World Bank's investment in education over the past 15 years ... which should provide an opportunity for significant influencing of future directions

International Reflect meeting

CIRAC, the International Reflect Circle, held its fourth international meeting in January 2004 – with practitioners from 20 countries gathering in Bangladesh. This was the first opportunity for CIRAC itself to celebrate winning the UNESCO International Literacy prize. In the middle of the year a huge national Reflect Convention in Bangladesh brought leading practitioners from across the country.

Reflect publications

The "Communication and Power" resource materials for practitioners of Reflect are now available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, with other translations also underway (eg into Urdu, Bengali, Chinese). The web-site www.reflect-action.org is now working in English, Spanish and French – and systems for updating it as a collaborative effort between UK, Uganda, Mali and Peru have been put in place. Also in the early part of the year DFID published "Literacy Gender and Social Agency"

based on Reflect work in Uganda and Bangladesh and hosted a major seminar for 50 DFID advisers in its headquarters to draw learning from the research.

Asia Reflect meeting in China

Participants from across Asia met in China for a workshop on Reflect in November – bringing together ActionAid and other agencies as a foundation for building stronger networking in the region. This meeting contributed to a major exercise of mapping Reflect practice across Asia both within and beyond AA.

Reflect celebrated in Geneva

Ministers of Education from 90 countries met in Geneva for an international conference on education to celebrate International Literacy Day in September. They all watched a short video on Reflect followed by a presentation about the approach by David Archer.

Future structure of education work revised

A proposal for the future structure of ActionAid's education work has been developed and broadly approved by International Directors ... premised on "empowered and connected lead education people" in all countries who prioritise education – and a stronger international team.

Changing structures

At the end of 2004 there were significant structural changes agreed on education in ActionAid. The International Education Unit merged with the Education Working Group to become the International Education Team, headed by David Archer with other team members in South Africa and Nigeria – and over time lead contact people in all countries joining the virtual team.

At the same time International Reflect Team became an independent group within ActionAid (in recognition that much Reflect work now goes beyond literacy). This strengthens the position of Reflect across the organisation and strengthens the structure to deliver education work.

ActionAid strategy and Education strategy

During 2004 a new ActionAid strategy was developed – and this will be finalised in the coming days. At the same time ActionAid developed a new education strategy – which built on work over the past 3 years. This will be finalised once the new agency wide strategy is approved. For the first time the agency wide strategy specifies education as one of the six thematic priorities of the whole organisation and key aspects of the education strategy are embedded in the agency-wide strategy. There is a real commitment to deepening our work on education across all countries. At an international staff conference in July in Bangkok the term "education is the DNA of ActionAid" was coined by our international director, Ramesh Singh.

More linkages made

A big emphasis has been placed on links between education and the other priority themes of ActionAid – HIV, food rights, gender, governance and conflict. Outline plans have been drawn up for inter-linking work with these other thematic teams (along the lines of the Violence against Girls work and the HIV and education work).

More information is available on all this work on request