



# Beyond statistics

## Measuring education as a human right

A consultative workshop on indicators for the right to education

### Reflections

The Right to Education Project  
London, 9 July 2010

On 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010 we convened a consultative workshop, *Beyond statistics: measuring education as a human right*, with the aim to explore reactions from human rights, development and education experts, as well as donors, on our set of indicators and its use in the field.

The specific objectives of the workshop were:

- to raise awareness about this new project;
- to share learning from current testing efforts;
- to make international contacts among participants in order to form strategic alliances and networks to pursue further action;
- to gather commitments from participants and their respective organisations, both for further involvement and, where possible, sustainable funding.

The workshop was supported by the Human Rights Consortium at the School of Advanced Study, University of London.

Below are some of the reflections and comments that emerged from the consultation:

■ The keynote speaker and member of our Advisory Panel, Amina Ibrahim, thought-provokingly highlighted the missing links between human rights and the Education for All (EFA) agenda. While underlining a sense of urgency over these gaps, she reminded us of some challenges, too:

- Rights fatigue
- Country by country reality (some don't even have basic statistics – to link with the workshop's title)!
- Data gap and lack of baselines
- Need to be both accurate, flexible and responsive

What for? Not just for research or glossy documents; it's about getting education to those who don't have it.  
(Amina Ibrahim)

→ Need for serious structural changes

■ The first impressions and reactions to our set of indicators identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clever	Requires capacity
Comprehensive	Too comprehensive
Tree visualisation	No user-friendly dimension
Implementable	Difficult to implement

■ A more general discussion then ensued about:

- Difficulties of implementing indicators within communities that have their own understanding of education (especially valid for indigenous communities)
- Complementary role of two different approaches: structure/process/outcome and 4As

- Need to make indicators accessible and comprehensible to users (the above terms may not make sense to them)
- Careful distinction between indicators and guiding questions for stakeholders

→ Explanatory notes are vital for guidance

Education should not be confined to formal schooling.  
(Gorgui Sow)

- Importance of relevance and sustainability
- Placing human rights provisions at the roots of the tree assumes universality, but there is a need to recognise that these are a patchwork of provisions
- Problems of accountability and enforceability
- Making sure that governments take them seriously, hence involve them in the process
- Important to use data from States to stress accountability, but these are often unreliable

Need to think strategically about other entry points than the legal dimension: it is a question of what power and competence are needed and who is powerful and competent. (Maria Amor Estebanez)

→ Garner info from communities themselves  
 → How to use indicators for structural systemic change

■ The presentations on our initial discussions for field tests in India and South Africa illustrated the need for:

When the State cannot be the defender of these rights, who is the player that can help?  
 (Salim Vally)

- Understanding of complexities (environment and definitions)
- Greater sensibility to ownership in the field
- Consideration of players in addition to processes
- Supplementary case studies and interviews

→ Careful balance/choice: indicators as both change agents and measurement may be too heavy to bear

■ Similar and additional thoughts emerged from all the other presentations, too:

- Think about change/outcome sought from using indicators
- Focus on governance is important
- How to use participation and accountability aspects to counteract abuses or distortions of power

What for?  
 And for whom?  
 (Eitan Felner)

→ Try to operationalise data collection

Quantitative v. Qualitative  
 Comprehensive v. Selective  
 Lay v. Technical  
 Human Rights v. Development  
 Universal v. Specific  
 (Ignacio Saiz)

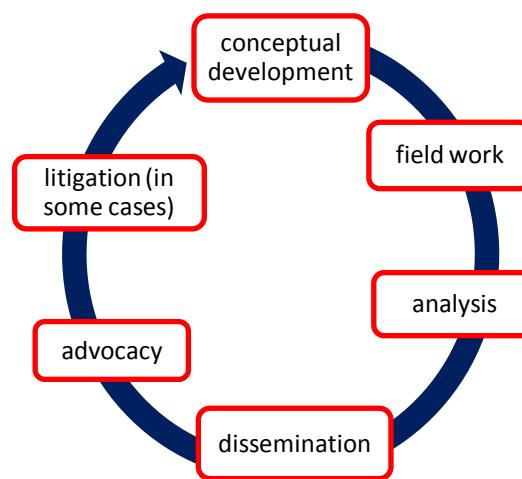
- It is not a mechanical exercise (yes/no; violation/not violation)
- Need to look at the broader picture and overall analysis
- Often not lack of resources but lack of will

→ Basis for specific recommendations

- Some issues with data collection in field testing:
  - Availability
  - Reliability
  - Timing
  - Disaggregation
  - Overlaps
- Question of using indicators to determine violations
  - Indicators need to be tied with specific treaty provisions
  - Need to reflect non-discrimination (fully disaggregated) and distinguish between immediate and progressive obligations

Can't rely on one single indicator – just because school enrolment is 90%, it doesn't mean that 90% of the students are attending regularly.  
Always need to include qualitative data.  
(Sital Kalantri)

→ Approach needs to be multi-faceted, including the following:



■ Suggestions for how the indicators could be used by and benefit different actors are summarised below:

- Academia
  - Evaluate impact
  - Incorporate in collaborative projects with large schemes (AAI's RRSC good example)
  - Evaluate own academic institutions
  - Use them in classes and workshops
  - How to benefit civil society using indicators?
  - Challenge government data collection methods
  - Use them as good source for analysing data and show how to use statistics
  - Support PhD students to use them in their field research
- Monitoring bodies and mechanisms
  - Bridge gap between standards and reality
  - Build capacity
  - Develop action plans
  - Incorporate indicators into programmes that are already going on
  - Assist States in report writing and follow-up (i.e., identify problems and improve situation)
  - Build partnerships with academic institutions
  - Think of other rights/principles as entry points

- Practitioners
  - Encourage cooperation with both governments and civil society
  - Build capacity by for example organising workshops (with regional, national, local partners)
  - Involve UN country offices
  - Issue of how to use data (to score? To name, shame and blame?). For example one could use indicators for school cards
  - Support information given to the media
  - Use them for practical examples with community involvement

- ➡ Look at existing partners and tap on existing funds
- ➡ Results should be in the classroom
- ➡ Need to prioritise indicators

- Some concluding reflections from the workshop's rapporteur and member of the Advisory Panel, Sheldon Shaeffer, highlighted the need to reflect and deal with complexities:

Not only a separate programme for each excluded group, situation or issue. Rather, ensure that the total impact of all these programmes is greater than the sum of their individual impact.  
(Sheldon Shaeffer)

- Unifying theory is difficult
- How to overcome confusion about complexity of the right to education?
- How to best focus and engage when there are so many aspects, rights-holders, actors?

- ➡ Look at the goal and the ultimate idea

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