

Education International's Input to the 2018 World Development Report

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Education International is a global union federation, representing over 32.5 million teachers and educators, from early childhood education to university. It has a presence in 173 countries, through its 400 national affiliated organizations. We would like to make the following comments and proposals to the World Development Report Team:

- 1. The WDR should reaffirm education as a basic human right and public good:** In line with the UN human rights treaties and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WDR should reiterate the need for governments to guarantee the right of every child, youth and adult to quality education. The Report should reaffirm the need for governments to ensure that primary and secondary education is **free**, that quality early childhood education and affordable tertiary education is available and accessible to all. In line with Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it should remind governments to make post-secondary education **progressively free** and accessible to all. The Report should reiterate the need for governments to strengthen public education systems and to regulate the activities of private providers where they exist.
- 2. The equity imperative:** Equitable access to quality education should be at the core of the WDR. The report should, therefore, critically analyze barriers and challenges faced by various categories of marginalized groups, including girls and boys, women and men, refugees, migrants, the disabled, children with special educational needs and those in rural and other underserved areas. State interventions are needed to balance the playing field through effective provision of school meals, implementation of school health programmes and introduction of subsidies in other services (like transportation). Legislation and concerted interventions to address social barriers like racism, child marriage, untouchability and child labour are key to ensuring students can make the most of the learning opportunities provided. Furthermore, geographical distance between schools, instruction in an alien language, absence of materials in students' mother tongue and lack of attention to the culture and history of students in the curriculum all act as barriers to student learning and quality education.
- 3. Education financing, the missing theme:** This being a report of the World Bank, it boggles the mind that there is no theme on financing education. We, therefore, strongly recommend that education financing be included as one of the themes. The report should restate the fundamental importance of increasing domestic investment in education, through progressive tax policies, for instance, in order to meet the agreed targets of at least 6% of GDP or at least 20% of the national budget. The WDR should also assess and analyses ODA commitments to education, and the need for development partners to meet the target of 0.7% of GNI and to ensure that at least 15% of ODA goes to education. Apart from increasing the education budget, it will also be important for the report to address how to improve the allocation of funding through, for instance, increased budget transparency, social dialogue and legislative safeguards for whistle blowers.

4. **Teachers and educators key:** Efforts to improve educational quality and equity will not succeed unless governments invest in teachers. Governments need to train and recruit more teachers, to pay them well and to provide them with the necessary tools and support. To ensure equity, it is also important to come up with measures for attracting teachers to and retaining them in rural and other disadvantaged communities. The WDR should encourage governments to engage in social and policy dialogue with teachers, education support personnel and their unions and to work together with them to come up with policy measures and interventions that work. The Report should not blame teachers, particularly when it comes to issues related to absenteeism, which are often reflections of structural problems and poor governance (for example, when teachers are forced to leave their schools to collect pay in the nearest city or town). The use of terms like ‘teacher effort’ in the concept note masks the root causes of challenges affecting teaching and learning such as large class sizes and unavailability of teaching and learning resources, while shifting the blame to the teacher. Governments and teacher unions can work together to make a difference. For example, in The Gambia, the teachers union entered into an agreement with the Government to pay teachers through its Cooperative Credit Union, thus solving the problem of ‘absenteeism’ related to this structural issue. Through the International Summit on the Teaching Profession and Quality Educators for All programme, EI has been working with governments to strengthen the teaching profession, teacher competences, teaching and learning within and beyond the OECD.
5. **Undue focus on learning metrics detrimental to equity and quality:** The concept note gives undue attention to learning metrics. While acknowledging the value of formative assessments, the concept note ignores risks associated with learning metrics, including their impact on a holistic view of quality education and equity. Assessment-oriented systems tend to promote competition rather than collaboration, to force teachers ‘to teach to the test’ and schools to leave crucial non-examinable areas on the margins of curriculum implementation. In addition, results-based approaches to financing as stated in the concept note have been widely criticized. A broad approach to education, as foreseen in 1948 is essential: “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups ...” (Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).