



**EDUCATION FOR ALL  
IN THE CARIBBEAN IN THE 1900s**

***RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT***

**Errol Miller**

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## FOREWORD

Education for All in the Caribbean: Assessment 2000 is a remarkable output, which is educational and cultural experience of the sub-region; a knowledge which is critical to the understanding of the unfolding social and economic developments. UNESCO is pleased to have been associated with this endeavour, particularly through our regional office in Kingston, Jamaica which, as co-ordinator of the Regional Advisory Group for the Caribbean Sub-region, was integrally involved in every aspect of the exercise. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Caribbean on activities of a mutually rewarding nature as the consequences and implications of the EFA Assessment become manifest.

*Colin Power*  
*Deputy Director-General for Education*

## SERIES INTRODUCTION

At Jomtien in 1990, member states of the United Nations adopted the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs and created the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (EFA Forum). One decade later, the EFA Forum embarked on an assessment of this initiative, intended to assist member states in examining their education provisions to inform the formulation of policy.

Once the Caribbean EFA Regional Advisory Group had embarked seriously on the assessment, it was quickly realised that it would be difficult to capture, in any one place, an assessment of all that had transpired in education in the Caribbean during the period 1990-1999. Moreover, the technical guidelines constrained assessors to specifics within quantitative and qualitative frames. However, because it was felt that education in the Caribbean is too dynamic to be circumscribed, the idea of a more wide-ranging monograph series was conceived.

Researchers, education practitioners, and other stakeholders in education were invited to contribute to the series. Our expectations were that the response would be quite moderate, given the short time-frame within which we had to work. Instead, we were overwhelmed by the response, both in terms of the number of enthusiastic contributors and the range of topics represented.

Caribbean governments and peoples have invested in the hardware for education--buildings, furniture, equipment; in the software, in terms of parent support and counselling services; and they have attended to inputs like books and other teaching/learning resources. They have wrestled with ways to evaluate, having gone through rounds of different national examinations, and modifications of ways to assess both primary and secondary education.

But, as the efforts to complete the country reports show, it has been more difficult to assess the impacts, if we take the eventual aim of education as improving the quality of life--we have had mixed successes. That the sub-region has maintained relative peace despite its violent past and contemporary upheavals may be cited as a measure of success; that the environment is threatened in several ways may be one of the indicators of how chequered the success has been.

Writers in the monograph/case study series have been able to document, in descriptive and analytic modes, some of the attempts, and to capture several of the impacts. That this series of monographs on Education for All in the Caribbean has been written, edited, and published in nine months (from first call for papers to issue of the published titles) is itself an indication of the impact of education, in terms of human capability and capacity.

It reflects, too, the interest in education of a number of stakeholders without whom the series would not have been possible. Firstly, the work of the writers is acknowledged. All worked willingly, hard, well, and, in most cases, without material reward. The sterling contribution of the editor, who identified writers and stayed with them to the end of the process, is also recognised, as is the work of the printer, who came through on time despite the severe time constraints. The financial contribution of the following agencies also made the EFA assessment process and the publication of the monograph/case study series possible: Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Department for International Development (DFID), International Labour Organization (ILO), Sub-Regional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC),

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill; the World Bank, and the UN country teams based in Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

We invite you to peruse individual titles or the entire series as, together, we assess Caribbean progress in education to date, and determine strategies to correct imbalances and sustain positive impacts, as we move towards and through the first decade of the new millennium.

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*EFA in the Caribbean: Assessment 2000*

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## ***LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS***

ALTA	Adult Literacy Tutors Association
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CUSO	Caribbean University Service Overseas
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEART/NTA	Human Employment and Resource Training Trust/National Training Agency
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISER	Institute of Social and Economic Research
JAMAL	Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRDF	National Research and Development Foundation
OAS	Organization of American States
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
SERVOL	Service Volunteered for All
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWI	The University of the West Indies
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Introduction

The purpose of this monograph is to review the experience of the Education For All (EFA) movement in the Caribbean at the end of the decade of the 1990s, in the context of the *World Declaration and Framework for Action* affirmed at Jomtien in 1990, and to identify the most challenging prospects for the future. The monograph aims to reflect upon both intended and unintended outcomes of the EFA movement in the Caribbean, as well as planned and unplanned accomplishments and deficits, and to point to some directions for the future.

The genius of Jomtien was the compromise it effected between quantity and quality and between schooling and learning. This compromise was reflected in its title and sub-title: *Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs*. EFA focused on schooling and putting every child into school, as well as on allowing every adult the opportunity to become literate. Its emphasis on *all* gave it a quantitative focus and mission. *Meeting basic learning needs* highlighted the qualitative dimension and placed the emphasis on learning. It highlighted children and adults possessed of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be conscious and constructive members of society. This tension between schooling and learning, quantity and quality, posed different challenges to different regions of the world. By 1990, almost all Caribbean countries had put all children of primary school age into school or were very close to doing so. The quantitative challenges resided in early childhood and secondary education, while the challenge of quality was relevant to all levels of basic education. This monograph seeks to examine and explore how the Caribbean responded to the challenges posed by the *World Declaration* and the *Framework for Action*.

## Defining the Caribbean

The Caribbean as a region has always been variously defined. The most inclusive definition describes the region, in geographic and cultural terms, as that bounded to the north by Bermuda and the Bahamas, to the west by Belize located on the Central American mainland, to the East by that arch of island extending to Barbados, and to the South by Guyana and Suriname on the South American mainland and the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. This definition of the Caribbean would include Dutch-, English-, French-, and Spanish-speaking territories. For EFA purposes, Cuba and the Dominican Republic have been grouped with Latin America, while Martinique, St. Martin, Guadeloupe, and Puerto Rico have been excluded on political grounds, based on their relationships to France and the United States respectively. By reduction, therefore, the Caribbean is defined here as Haiti from the French-speaking group, all the English-speaking territories, and Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles, and Suriname from the Dutch-speaking group.

More important than the political factors that shape the definition of the Caribbean is the fact of functional cooperation between the 22 countries defined as the Caribbean for EFA purposes. The 18 English-speaking countries have regular intercourse through various sub-regional mechanisms. The vast majority of these countries are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), of which Haiti, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles are also members. The goal of CARICOM is to establish a common market in the sub-region with free movement of goods, capital, and people. This framework of shared economic goals for the future, given the common historical and cultural heritage of the sub-region, provides an important contextual framework for the development and restructuring of basic education in the sub-region.

## Methodology

In setting about this review and reflection, the author relied mainly on the following sources of information:

*The World Declaration and Framework for Action*  
*Education for All: Caribbean Perspectives and Imperatives* (Miller, 1992)  
The EFA Country Assessments 1999  
The Regional Synthesis of EFA in the Caribbean, 1999  
Monographs submitted as part of the EFA Assessment process  
*Educational Reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Miller, 1999)

The approach adopted is that of examining basic education in the Caribbean as it is delivered to infants, children, and adults and compared with the target dimensions set by the *Framework for Action*. In this regard, the focus is on accomplishments and achievements on the one hand and, on the other hand,

shortfalls and outstanding commitments at the end of the decade of the 1990s. The pattern for the review and reflection is shown in tabular form as follows:

Areas		
Basic Education	Accomplishments/ Achievements	Shortfalls/Outstanding Commitments
Early Childhood	X	Y
Primary	X	Y
Adults	X	Y

The review and reflection will also take account of the modalities used in the Caribbean to address EFA during the 1990s, with a view to identifying lessons learned and the challenges in basic education facing the region at the onset of the 21st century.

### The Caribbean Position at Jomtien: Revisited

Caribbean countries made significant inputs into the formulation of both the *World Declaration* and the *Framework for Action*. These inputs came from two sources: the caucus of Ministers of Education and the Technical Officers and Rapporteurs' summaries of comments and observations made at the roundtables and plenary sessions of the Caribbean Consultation leading up to the World Conference. These separate observations were merged by the Consultation into the 20-point Caribbean position paper formally presented to the Inter-Agency Commission. The *World Declaration* and *Framework for Action*, approved by acclaim in Jomtien, addressed 16 of the 20 points of the Caribbean position in a manner that satisfactorily addressed the substance of the matters raised.

It is important to note the four points that were not satisfactorily addressed. These were:

The inclusion of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a participant in the deliberations on EFA. The essence of this point related to structural adjustment, debt, and their impact of public and private funding of education.

The presentation of gender disparity and gender equity solely as greater access of women and girls to basic education. The gravamen of this observation was that gender disparities were not exclusive to women.

A more realistic timetable for the implementation of the *Framework for Action*. The Caribbean position was that a decade was not enough for all countries to match the spirit implicit in the *Declaration* or to meet target dimensions explicitly stated in the *Framework for Action*.

The legal requirements of various multilateral agencies that prevented some Caribbean countries from participating fully in the World Conference. There was not an equitable treatment of Caribbean countries that were still dependencies of European countries. Hence, some were officially barred from inclusion as full participants in the EFA Consultations.

In reflecting on and reviewing the EFA experience in the Caribbean, it is important not only to focus on the *Declaration* and the *Framework for Action* and the extent to which they impacted on basic education in the region, but also to determine the extent to which the Caribbean observations that were not part of the international consensus proved valid.

Three of the four points put forward at the World Conference in 1990 but which were not taken up in the *Declaration* and *Framework for Action* remain valid and are still relevant:

1. Debt remains a major constraint on Caribbean countries in sustaining previous investments in education and in making new ones. No projections for the further development and improvement of basic education can proceed without taking account of increasing public debt in several countries and declining disposable income in certain segments of Caribbean populations, as poverty continues to be a critical issue in the region.

2. Gender disparity conceived of only as highlighting deficits in the provision of basic education for girls and women excludes the fact of the marginalisation of men from some sections of society. The poor participation and performance of some boys in basic education, and high rates of illiteracy among some men are no longer only a Caribbean phenomenon. Gender disparity is not restricted to girls and women but also applies to some boys and men.
3. The time frame of a decade has proven to be inadequate given the ambitious nature of the *World Declaration* and *Framework for Action*. Certainly, it will take more time for all the challenges highlighted by the *Framework for Action* to be addressed, and more time for the investments that have been made to manifest their effects. Consequently, there are many areas in which the goals of EFA have outstanding obligations. Also, there are several areas in which substantial investments have been made, the impact and effect of which are still to be made manifest.

These issues, therefore, must be addressed in any future plans and programmes for the advancement of basic education. They cannot continue to be ignored by the world community, as was the case in 1990. The fourth issue raised by the Caribbean has been resolved. Evidence of this is that the Caribbean Sub-Regional Workshop invited all 22 countries that are included in the definition of the Caribbean used for EFA. All 22 Caribbean countries are being treated equitably at the end of the decade.

### **The Efforts Made to Implement EFA in the Caribbean**

In examining the responses of countries to the challenges of the *World Declaration* and *Framework for Action*, and of the 1990s, it must be immediately stated that Caribbean countries took a holistic approach to education and did not deal with the challenges posed by EFA in an isolated manner. There were no separate plans drawn up for EFA, although the Inter-Agency Commission encouraged this. Caribbean countries in the Caribbean took a holistic approach to education and did not deal with the challenges posed by EFA in an isolated manner. There were no separate plans drawn up for EFA, although the Inter-Agency Commission encouraged this. Caribbean countries in the Caribbean took a holistic approach to education and did not deal with the challenges posed by EFA in an isolated manner. There were no separate plans drawn up for EFA, although the Inter-Agency Commission encouraged this. Caribbean countries in the Caribbean took a holistic approach to education and did not deal with the challenges posed by EFA in an isolated manner. They gave no credit to the *World Declaration* or *Framework for Action* as sources of their inspiration. Regional politicians and officials adopted EFA goals as if they were their own. The bases of action on EFA goals arose from internal imperatives that gave little explicit recognition to external commitments. Accordingly, there was little explicit recognition given to EFA outside of official documents and official circles.

The high points of the EFA movement in the Caribbean, therefore, have been the Caribbean Consultation in Kingston in November 1989, the World Conference in Jomtien in March 1990, and the EFA end-of-decade evaluation that took place in 1999. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in conducting the EFA assessment, while references could always be found to the *World Declaration* and *EFA Framework for Action* in official documents, there was little public awareness of the links between what the region had done and the EFA movement itself.

At a workshop convened in St Lucia in November 1999 by the World Bank to review management and implementation of educational projects in the region, all 16 countries present reported that, in the 1990s, they had mounted projects in basic education through either loans or grants from donor agencies. At the workshop, neither the governments receiving the loans and the grants nor the donor agencies granting them made any connection with EFA. The point of this anecdote is simple. Governments in the region took significant actions to improve basic education following the World Conference. However, not much of that action was explicitly connected to EFA. The Caribbean did a lot about EFA without saying so.

The end-of-decade review must, therefore, look at what the sub-region did about education as a whole in order to get a full appreciation of what it did about EFA. In reviewing the actions taken by Caribbean countries in responding to EFA and other demands, it is convenient to group countries according to language groups within the sub-region.

## The Commonwealth Caribbean

All Commonwealth Caribbean countries have responded to the imperatives of the 1990s and the *Framework for Action*, but not in the same way. The responses can be classified into two groups: those that have developed comprehensive education reform strategies and plans, and those that have adopted a project driven approach to education reform.

### Countries adopting comprehensive education reform strategies

This first group of countries consists of the Bahamas, Barbados, the countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and Trinidad and Tobago. They established National Commissions, Task Forces, or Working Groups mandated to develop comprehensive education reform strategies. The Bahamas set up a National Task Force which worked for almost one year. The *Final Report* (1994) was accepted by the government as national policy, and is being implemented. Barbados set up a National Commission and adopted many of the Commission's recommendations in its *National Education Plan, 1993-2000*. Trinidad and Tobago also set up a Task Force, and has incorporated its recommendations in its Education Plan, 1993-2000 (1994). The OECS countries established a Working Group in 1991 which developed the *OECS Education Reform Strategy: Foundation for the Future* (1991). This strategy was subsequently adopted by the Ministers of Education and the Prime Ministers of the OECS Authority as the long-term policy for educational development in the sub-region. Implementation of the strategy began in 1993.

An important point to note about these initiatives is their methodology. They all involved in-depth and wide-scale consultation within their respective societies. These consultations included persons and groups involved in economic activities in Ministries and statutory bodies within the public sector; large and small enterprises within the private sector; associations representing these enterprises, including small businesses, manufacturers, commerce, tourism and hospitality trades, commodity groups, financial services; and professional organisations representing practitioners in law, medicine, engineering, journalism, accounting, and others. They also included persons and groups representing civil society, consisting of various religious bodies, service clubs, citizens' associations, political parties including the opposition and governing parties, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in social, economic, and philanthropic ventures. Also included in the consultations were persons and groups concerned with schools, including principals and teachers at all levels, teachers' associations and unions, parents' organisations and parent/teachers' associations, students and student associations, and boards of governors where these existed. Finally, the consultations included the political directorate, both those in government and opposition.

In the Bahamas, the Task Force visited all the inhabited Family Islands to ensure that their views were heard in addition to those in the metropolitan centres of New Providence and Grand Bahamas. In Trinidad and Tobago, not only did the Task Force visit both islands of the twin-island Republic, but it also consulted people in depressed urban communities and in rural areas. In Barbados, the Commission held meetings in communities all over the island and received written and oral submissions. The Working Group in the OECS not only visited all the islands but also had in-depth discussions with a wide cross-section of the society in each island. All of these exercises attempted to benefit from the broadest span of views from all stakeholders, actors, and beneficiaries within the society and educational systems of the countries concerned. In addition, they all reviewed the available literature in order to benefit from the latest knowledge in the respective fields, and utilised up-to-date statistics, from databases, on various aspects of national life in the respective countries.

The OECS Working Group deserves special mention for two reasons: (a) eight countries decided that they would plan their future in education on a collective sub-regional basis instead of an individual national basis. This is unusual, if not unique, in educational planning because the exercise was not restricted to any one component or level of education, but applied to the entire system. The decision was predicated on the principle that one way of sustaining long-term cooperation within the sub-region is institutionalising integration through the education system; and (b) it was the only exercise that invited external participation. The chairman, though a Caribbean national, was not a citizen of an OECS country as were its members. In addition, the Working Group invited state of the art reviews on several topics from Caribbean and Canadian experts. At the Colloquium of the Working Group, at which the authors presented their reviews, respected Caribbean educators and representatives of agencies assisting education in the sub-region were invited to participate in the exercise. The Working Group, in making its recommendations, took account of the views expressed in the consultations, the findings from the state of the art reviews and the feedback received at

the Colloquium, data on the OECS countries, feedback from the eight Chief Education Officers in the sub-region, and its own judgements. Following the approval of the long-term strategy, the various countries within the OECS undertook the assessment of their national systems against the background of the strategy, and sought to establish national priorities.

Having developed comprehensive educational reform strategies, these countries, or groups of countries, proceeded to seek and obtain loans and grants to implement various aspects of their proposed reforms. For example, the OECS countries obtained assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to fund the Education Reform Unit of the OECS Secretariat in order to coordinate the implementation of the reform strategy and such core activities as the harmonisation of primary education and drafting of legislation governing education in the sub-region. The European Union has provided assistance to develop tertiary education and to train secondary school teachers in the sub-region. Assistance from the Department for International Development (DFID), Caribbean has provided assistance for upgrading primary teachers.

### **Countries adopting a project driven approach**

The second group is comprised of Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. They are following a more project driven path, in which interventions are specifically directed at particular aspects or levels of the education system. While in some instances education plans have been formulated, they are dominated by projects, and do not involve a comprehensive restatement of goals and objectives. Even in following this path, however, these countries employed the same consultative processes highlighted above.

Belize's reforms are centred around a World Bank project focused on primary education. In addition, there have been some private sector initiatives to place computers in secondary schools and colleges and link them by means of a wide area network. In Guyana and Jamaica, the reform efforts are centred on Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) projects at the primary level and World Bank projects at the secondary level. In both countries, also, private sector groups have been involved in introducing information technology in secondary and tertiary institutions. In the Turks and Caicos Islands, reforms are based on the recommendations of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sponsored assessment of primary and secondary education, British Development Division sponsored interventions, and the efforts to establish a Community College with assistance from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC).

Notwithstanding the different approaches to reform, the elements of the strategies used by the different countries share a great deal of similarities and themes. The following list provides a brief overview of the themes:

- Improving the quality of primary education.
- Modernising the schools and the classrooms through more widespread use of technology.
- Rationalising secondary education through curriculum reform of the early grades, restructuring admission and promotion procedures, and providing more extensive career guidance.
- Expanding tertiary education, including the use of the distance education modality, and linking this level of education more closely to the labour force demands, especially in the priority economic sectors, namely tourism and hospitality services, financial services, light manufacturing, and agro-industry.
- Increasing and improving foreign language teaching at the secondary and tertiary levels and linking these to the global market place and tourism.
- Improving the status, salary, and training of teachers.
- Restructuring the financing of education to increase cost effectiveness and include cost recovery, cost sharing, and special taxes to meet educational expenditure.
- Introducing various value oriented projects and materials to influence character formation, to promote conflict resolution, and to influence the development of wholesome and positive attitudes.

- Improving the management of schools by greater involvement of communities and parents and more accountability measures for schools and teachers.
- Promoting greater partnership with the state in the delivery of education.
- Strengthening and expanding non-formal education programmes for youths and adults, including literacy programmes.

It must also be noted that, during this period, the CARICOM Secretariat sponsored an initiative aimed at developing a regional education strategy. With the assistance of distinguished educators from the sub-region, the Secretariat produced the *CARICOM Educational Development Strategy* for the long-term development of the sub-region. The various national efforts and this sub-regional effort all took place simultaneously. While there was interaction and interplay between personnel involved in these exercises, it could not be said that the national reforms were related in any linear manner to the sub-regional formulations. Neither was the CARICOM strategy a synthesis of the various national efforts. It was an independent exercise with its own rationale, from a regional perspective.

As a post-script it must be noted that almost all of the countries that adopted a project approach at the beginning of the decade moved to a more comprehensive approach to educational development at the end of the decade. The Turks and Caicos Islands developed a national five-year plan for education for the period 1999 to 2004. Belize recently developed its *Education Sector Strategy 1999-2003*. The Ministry of Education and Culture, Jamaica, recently published a *Green Paper on Education* and invited national discussion as a first step in its development of its long term Education Sector Strategy.

### **The Dutch Caribbean**

The Dutch Caribbean consists of Suriname, an independent country on the South American continent, Aruba, an island with its own status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Netherlands Antilles, consisting of five islands located in two groups in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. The Dutch Caribbean has a long history of public primary education. It also enjoys a high level of educational development that includes universal primary and secondary education. It also has considerable strengths in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In the Dutch tradition, the delivery of education remains largely the result of a partnership between the State and the Church.

The Netherlands Antilles has introduced several reforms through the policy paper *Stappen Naar Een Beter Toekomst* (Going to a Better Future). These include the following:

- The introduction, in 1991, of compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 15 years. While universal education has existed for some time, irregular attendance and dropout have been matters of some concern. The enactment of compulsory education laws is intended to ensure that students attend regularly and remain in school until the end of the statutory period.
- The use of computer technology to assist principals in their administrative tasks by reducing the time spent on clerical and routine matters, thus affording them more time for instructional leadership.
- The upgrading of textbooks and teaching and learning materials so that they are brought in line with the latest developments in education, as well as in the particular subject areas. Particular attention has been paid to the Dutch language, mathematics, and social studies.
- The establishment of the Foundation for School Materials, in Curaçao, charged with the development of appropriate materials.
- Providing teachers with remedial materials to help them address some of the learning needs of their students.
- Later in the decade, the government took the decision to totally restructure basic education which will be delivered in three cycles: first cycle for children 4 to 8 years, second cycle for children 8 to 12 years, and third cycle for adolescents 12 to 15 years. By so doing, early childhood education will be integrated with the first two grades of primary schooling. Further, it is proposed to introduce native languages of the majority of the population as the language of instruction in primary schools.

The government has also decided to reform lower secondary education in order to improve its quality. Accordingly, a common curriculum is to be offered to all children in the first two years of secondary education, irrespective of the type of secondary schools to which students have been assigned. The emphases of the new curricula are cooperative learning, learning by doing, integration of subject matter across disciplines, and the development of higher order cognitive skills.

Suriname has had compulsory primary education since 1876. In addition, approximately 82% of children aged four and five years are enrolled in pre-schools. In fact, almost every primary school has a pre-school attached. Also, special schools provide education for children who are developmentally challenged in different ways. Against this background, the EFA efforts in Suriname have concentrated on the qualitative and not the quantitative aspects of the *World Declaration and Framework for Action*.

It must be noted that Suriname has had its own share of political instability over the last decade. While not of the same magnitude as Haiti, there have been coups, resulting in the disruption of normalcy by violent conflicts related to contest for political office. Notwithstanding these political problems, Suriname continues to allocate a high proportion of its resources to education, which accounts for approximately 22 to 26% of total government expenditure and 9 to 11% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Nevertheless, many school buildings are poorly maintained and school equipment is sometimes out of date or non-existent. There has been a high rate of migration of qualified teachers from the school system and the country, possibly accelerated by the unstable political climate, among other things.

(Ringeling, 1995) noted that the decade of the 1980s was marked by significant reforms in primary education. These included the following:

- The reforms of the curriculum to more closely reflect Suriname culture and society.
- The production of textbooks specifically for the Suriname school system, and the distribution of these textbooks to all children in the school system.
- The in-service training of teachers related to both the new curriculum and the textbooks produced to support it.
- The establishment of a learning resource centre for curriculum development, guidance, and library support for the schools.
- The creation of community guidance teams, adopting a multidisciplinary approach, to serve the needs of several schools in particular areas of the country. Among other things, these teams carried out diagnostic testing aimed at identifying the learning needs, with a view to assisting the classroom teacher, or referring students to specialists or special education schools.

Ringeling noted that, despite these efforts, underachievement in primary education has remained unchanged. Indeed, the level of repetition and the dropout and completion rates have remained unchanged over the last 30 years. Suriname has the highest repetition rate in the Caribbean, approximately 23% per annum. Repetition is highest in Grade 1, where it is 30%, and lowest in Grade 6, where it is 14%.

To place the repetition rate in Suriname in context, it must be noted that promotion is based on achievement, judged in relation to standards set by the Ministry of Education. Also, at the end of primary education, students sit a Primary School Leaving Examination that determines their future placement and progress. Several students remain in primary school beyond age 12 as a result of repetition and the requirement of passing the School Leaving Certificate.

What is particularly troubling about the repetition and completion rates is that they are not equally distributed across schools and socio-economic categories. Schools located in the slums of Paramaribo and other areas with depressed communities have much higher repetition and lower completion rates than schools serving suburban populations. Likewise, students from the lower socio-economic categories tend to repeat grades at a much higher rate than their more fortunate peers. The repetition rate for low SES students was 42% compared to 14% among high SES students. Indeed, 70% of low SES students repeated a grade between Grades 1 to 3.

What is highlighted by these data is that while primary education is available to all children in Suriname, and despite the implementation of progressive educational support programmes, students from the

underprivileged sections of the society are unable to benefit fully from the provisions made. Ringeling noted that factors related to the underachievement in primary schooling in Suriname could be listed as follows:

- The difficulties students experience in expressing themselves in Dutch, the language of instruction and the official language of the country.
- The assistance low SES students are required to give parents with respect to economic activities and child rearing, especially older siblings, which disrupts their learning through absences from school.
- The effects of poverty, particularly as this related to malnutrition and health.
- The lack of preparation of teachers to deal with students from deprived circumstances. Teachers are generally prepared to teach middle and upper class students.
- Shortage of instructional materials and school supplies in the form of notebooks and pens.

This study on underachievement in primary education in Suriname underscores the necessity to pay attention to the demand side and not only to the supply side of education. The notion that once education is made available then children will learn, glosses over many important considerations and is, at best, naïve. One only has to look at the experience of underachievement for sections of the population of the developed countries for corroborative data. Cognitive support, in the form of better textbooks, more sophisticated testing, and more appropriate curricula may be helpful but is not sufficient to promote learning, if other concerns are not addressed. Chief among these is access to opportunities that will materially change life for the better.

## Haiti

After roller-coaster attempts to improve education during the decade of the 1980s, political developments virtually brought the process almost to a halt by the end of the decade. As an immediate follow-up to the World Conference, and with assistance from UNDP and UNESCO, the Haitian government commissioned a study to point the way forward in education. With the election of a democratic government in February 1991, and armed with the recommendations of the study, new measures were taken to resume educational development. However, in September of that year, the democratically elected government was overthrown by a coup that forced the President into exile. The political situation further deteriorated with another coup in May 1994.

Educational development was literally placed on hold due to four main factors:

- The international community suspended all assistance to Haiti, including support for educational projects.
- Many community-based organisations, NGOs, and religious bodies rejected the government.
- The government's own action of shifting and changing officials, disrupting various programmes, and seeking little cooperation, left it largely isolated and inward looking.
- General fear and distress in the general population undermined many efforts to implement change.

In October 1994, the President was able to resume office as a result of military intervention by the United States and, in November, a new government was appointed. The process of educational development has, therefore, only recently been resumed and is still in the planning stages since both the political and bureaucratic machinery are only now being reconstituted. It is within this over-riding context that Haiti's implementation of the EFA since Jomtien has to be understood and interpreted.

In response to the World Conference, Haiti, in 1990, developed its *National Plan for Participation by the Republic of Haiti in the Pan-American Vision of Education for All*. The National Plan targeted three areas: pre-school and child development, primary and basic education, and non-formal education and adult literacy. The target for pre-school education was to expand enrolment from 102,000 in 1990 to 420,273 by the year 2003. For primary education, the target was universal education by the year 2000, which meant increasing enrolment from 580,100 in 1990 to 997,600 by the end of the decade. The target for non-formal

education was the elimination of illiteracy among the three million adults over 15 years by the year 2000. Indeed, the decade of the 1990s was declared the Decade of Literacy in Haiti.

In 1991, the democratically elected government accepted and upgraded the National Plan, but before meaningful implementation could begin it was displaced. Despite the difficult political circumstances, several private groups, at the grassroots level, implemented educational programmes, notwithstanding the blight that had overtaken the public sector. With the resumption of constitutional order in October 1994 and the return to democratic government, there has been renewed activity in the public sector. This has included the construction of new schools, the renovation of existing ones, the reorganisation of school zones to facilitate distribution of school supplies, teaching equipment, and learning materials, and special attention to disadvantaged groups.

In light of the political upheavals over most of the last five years in Haiti, one would have thought that virtually no progress had been made in relation to the EFA targets. However, this is not the case. In 1990, only 6% of the 1,340,000 children aged 0 to 6 years received any attention in pre-school centres; by 1995, this had increased to approximately 25%. The vast majority were in private centres, that is, over 80%. In primary education, enrolment increased from 41.0% of the children 6 to 12 years to 51.1%. Again, most of this increase was accounted for by the private sector that enrolls 68% of primary school age children in Haiti. Also, in the area of adult literacy, while figures are not available, programmes mounted by religious and other bodies, chief among whom have been Mission Alpha of the Protestant Churches, have received strong popular support and some measure of success.

That any progress could have been made speaks volumes for the indomitable spirit of the Haitian people and the commitment of agencies outside of government control. The return to constitutional rule and democratic government placed new demands for the public sector to respond constructively and substantially to the expectations of the people.

In addition to the constraints of socio-political instability, the EFA initiative in Haiti has been hampered by severe limitations of human and financial resources to implement programmes. In addition, there have been structural problems reflected in the fact that several organisations charged with implementation have remained isolated and uncoordinated. Further, new programmes have been established with new organisations, unrelated to existing ones that share the same mission.

### **Assessing Progress on the Six Target Dimensions**

The *Framework for Action* set six target dimensions. These were:

- Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged, and disabled children.
- Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or whatever level of education is considered as 'basic') by the year 2000.
- Improving learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e.g., 80% of 14 year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement.
- Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age group to be determined in each country) to about one half of its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between male and female literacy.
- Expansion of provisions of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youths and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment, and productivity.
- Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills, and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all educational channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communications, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes.

It is necessary to assess the extent to which Caribbean countries were able to implement the *Framework for Action* with respect to these six target dimensions. Each target dimension will be assessed in turn.

### **Some Issues Involved in Measuring Progress**

Before proceeding to discuss progress, or the lack of it, in meeting the six target dimensions of the EFA *Framework for Action*, it is necessary to note at least four important issues related to measurement of progress in EFA in the Caribbean context:

During the decade of the 1990s, several countries invested a significant amount of time and resources in upgrading and improving their data gathering and data analysis capacities and capabilities in educational statistics. Added to this have been the efforts of the EFA Forum, led by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, in developing 18 common indicators, and in providing technical support for the end-of-decade assessment. The combined effect of both country and EFA Forum efforts is that of improving the accuracy and reliability of the educational data gathered in 1999. These data may be the most reliable statistics on education ever gathered in the region. The point is that the educational data gathered at the end of the decade may be significantly more accurate than those reported at the beginning of the decade. However, there is no estimate of the extent of the improvement in accuracy between the beginning and end of the decade. Where differences are large, small or modest improvements in the accuracy of the two sets of data may not be important. However, where differences are small or modest, corresponding improvements in the accuracy of the data may be a very important issue. Caution should, therefore, be exercised in interpreting small or modest differences between the educational statistics reported at the beginning and at the end of the decade.

The private provision of education is not consistently and accurately measured across the sub-region. In some countries, the private provision of education at all levels of education are accurately measured and consistently included in the educational statistics of the countries. In other countries, it is accurately reported at the early childhood level but not at the primary and secondary levels. In other countries, it is the reverse; the early childhood provision is not quantified. One implication of this is that the full extent of the provision of basic education in some Caribbean countries is underestimated because the statistics represent the public provision accurately but omit or under-report the private contributions. The situation is compounded by the fact that the private provision may be reported in some years and not others. Another implication is that caution needs to be exercised in making comparisons between countries with different practices in reporting the private provision of education. One mitigating consideration is that in the vast majority of Caribbean countries the private provision of primary and secondary education is relatively small.

The population statistics employed in various indicators may be inaccurate. Censuses were last done in the Caribbean in 1990 or 1991. Most Caribbean school age populations are declining, due largely to decreases in the number of live births and, to a lesser extent, to migration. While Departments and Institutes of Statistics in the various countries make annual adjustments to the census data, those adjustments may not accurately represent the reality. The implication of this is that the ratio calculated with these population statistics as their denominators may contain a noticeable degree of error. The only mitigating factor is that the ratios calculated at the beginning of the decade would have contained similarly inaccurate population data since the results of the censuses would not have been available before 1992 or 1993.

Almost all of the 18 indicators used in the end-of-decade assessment are quantitative. They measure provision of education for all. The *World Declaration and Framework for Action*, in 1990, contained a compromise between two sets of competing issues, which were reflected in the title, *Education For All*, and the subtitle, *Meeting Basic Learning Needs*. The title focused on the quantitative: provision of schooling for children and non-formal opportunities for adults, while the sub-title focused on the qualitative: meeting basic learning needs. The compromised effected in title and subtitle constitutes the genius of Jomtien in holding, in constructive tension, quantitative provision and qualitative considerations in basic education. The end-of-decade review has focused much more on the quantitative, the provision of access to basic education, than on the qualitative considerations relating to basic learning needs.

The approach adopted in this paper is that caution must be exercised in interpreting the data collected and reported in the end-of-decade review. Further, this review must be regarded as a milestone and not an end point. Additional work will need to be done early in the next decade, after the censuses, to more accurately assess the progress that was actually made during the decade of the 1990s. In other words, the end-of-decade assessment of EFA in the Caribbean is very much a work in progress.

### **Expansion of Early Childhood Care and Development to the Disadvantaged and the Disabled**

It must be immediately noted that the *Framework for Action* did not demarcate an age range for early childhood care and development. Such a demarcation is important if this target dimension is to be meaningfully assessed within the context of the notion of universal or expanded access. While the World Conference may have been silent about this demarcation, the assessment of progress towards satisfying this target dimension must be explicit in its specification of what is being assessed.

An emerging international definition of the early childhood phase in human development is from birth to eight years. It is also generally accepted that by the age of six, children ought to be enrolled in primary school. This is one of the fundamental pillars of EFA. Within the context of EFA, the broadest definition of the early childhood age range would have to be from birth to six years.

Generally speaking, the early childhood period is broken into two stages: from birth to three years, when infants can be accommodated in day care centres, and from three to five or six years, when they enrol in pre-schools. It cannot be reasonably argued that all, or even most, children from birth to three years should be enrolled in, or sent to, day care centres. The home is the accustomed place for infants of this age. Also, a very cogent argument could be put forward to the effect that formal learning cannot be meaningfully prescribed for these early years, notwithstanding their importance for future learning. Hence, for the purpose of this target dimension of expanding access to basic education, it would appear that it is the latter years, three to five or six years, that must be specified. In practical terms, any statistic that simply takes the number of children from birth to five or six years, in any country, and uses that as the denominator, and then take the number of children in day care and pre-schools as the numerator, is almost a meaningless indicator of access to basic education at this level.

The thrust of this target dimension is not merely the expansion of early childhood care and development, but expansion of these provisions to the disadvantaged and disabled in society. Early childhood education has been provided in the Caribbean for well over 160 years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the region started the decade with a relatively high rate of provision of early childhood education. In fact, 16 of the 22 countries of the region start formal education in the public school system at age 5, and set five years as the age at which compulsory education commences.

### **Accomplishments and achievements**

Early childhood education was one of the target dimensions that received considerable attention in the Caribbean over the decade. This was not merely as a result of responses to the challenges of the *Framework for Action*, but because of imperatives arising from within the region. In response to the question of why was there increasing demand for early childhood education, some respondents in St. Kitts opined that it was because mothers are working. One sceptic in the audience rejected that explanation and was adamant that the real explanation was that grandmothers were working. In addition, there is increasing recognition that an early start and good pre-school education confer considerable advantages on those children benefiting from them.

**Table 1****Access to Early Childhood Education: Percentage of 3 To 5 Year Olds In Pre-Schools**

<b>Degree of Access</b>			
<b>Countries</b>	<b>Early 1900's</b>	<b>1997/98</b>	<b>Female 97/98</b>
Anguilla	88	93	98
Antigua & Barbuda	87.7	92.7	98
Bahamas	100	100	-
Barbados **	52.7	68.1	70.2
Belize	-	22.9	22.1
Bermuda	133.3	100.2	-
British Virgin Islands	49	89	-
Cayman Islands *	-	-	-
Dominica	78.1	71.4	75.6
Grenada	61.3	72.3	73.8
Guyana	81.9	93.6	92.0
Haiti	-	64.3	65
Jamaica	77	84.2	-
Montserrat	83	81	-
Netherland Antilles	101.6	102.5	103.9
St. Kitts & Nevis *	-	-	-
St. Lucia	N/A	78.3	-
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	46	-	-
Suriname	82	N/A	-
Trinidad & Tobago	43	N/A	-
Turks & Caicos Islands	N/A	68.6	70.8

*Note. \*Enrolment statistics were provided but no population data. In both instances, the percentage of the cohort enrolled in pre-school is said to be very high.*

*\*\*The figure represents public school enrolment only. Private schools exist but their enrolment is not reported and recorded.*

Table 1 shows that, over the decade of the 1990s, most countries of the sub-region expanded early childhood education for infants between the ages of three to five years; The Bahamas, Bermuda, and the Netherlands Antilles have achieved universal early childhood education. Indeed, it would appear that universal early childhood education is a real possibility in the foreseeable future in the case of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, and the British Virgin Islands, and within reach in Jamaica. While exact figures are not available, pre-school enrolment in the Cayman Islands and St. Kitts and Nevis is very high. In the Cayman Islands, it is reported that 93.6% of children entering Grade 1 had been to pre-school.

Two countries, Dominica and Montserrat, showed decreases in enrolment in pre-school education. In the case of Dominica, however, caution has to be exercised in interpreting the data. Over the decade, the number of pre-schools in Dominica increased from 65 to 82, the enrolment increased from 2,246 to 2,584, and the teacher pupil ratio declined from 26.7 to 18.3. One suspects, therefore, that the combined effects of declining live births, migration, and inaccurate population projections may be involved in the seeming decline of participation in pre-school education in Dominica.

The case of Montserrat is different and special. Indeed, it gives a timely warning about being sanguine about projections of universal early childhood education in the near future. In 1990, Montserrat enrolled 83% of 3 and 4 year-olds in pre-schools. By 1994, enrolment had increased to 95%, and universal early childhood education was in sight. However, following the devastating impact of the volcanic eruption in the territory, early childhood enrolment declined to 81% of a decreased population in 1998. The circumstances surrounding the decline in Dominica are not readily understood and require some investigation.

One of the factors behind the general expansion of early childhood education in the Caribbean is increased government support over the decade of the 1990s. This is caused not only through additional subventions and grants, but also by pre-school units being established at primary schools. Decline in the number of live births leading to a decrease in the primary school population is creating unused capacity in many primary schools. In these circumstances, pre-school units are being established in primary schools where no such provisions previously existed, and where pre-schools existed but the physical facilities were less than satisfactory. Many such pre-schools are being absorbed into primary schools.

Given the fact that most Caribbean countries do not have a very large middle class, it would seem fair to infer that a substantial portion of the expansion of early childhood care and provision within the region during the 1990s benefited disadvantaged groups. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to conclude that, with respect to the expansion of early childhood education to disadvantaged groups, the Caribbean region can report some accomplishments with respect to meeting this target dimension.

Belize is the country with the lowest provision for early childhood education, and it faces the greatest challenges in expanding provisions at this level.

In addition to expanding early childhood provision over the decade of the 1990s, several countries made substantial efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education. These countries made investments in teacher training, material production, the improvement of facilities, and better pay and working conditions for teachers.

There is little or no empirical data that would allow factual statements to be made as to whether or not the measures to improve the general quality of early childhood education in the region did indeed have the desired effect. The Child Focus Project, executed by the Caribbean Child Development Centre and the Institute of Education of The University of the West Indies (UWI), and sponsored by the World Bank, developed standards for early childhood education that were accepted by the National Training Agency (NTA) of Jamaica, and later adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the international standard for early childhood education. Hopefully, these standards will facilitate the more precise measurement of the quality of early childhood education in the sub-region.

### **Shortfall and outstanding commitments**

Notwithstanding the fact that no specific quantum of expansion of early childhood education and care was set for this target dimension, and the fact that there has been positive movement within the target dimension within the Caribbean over the decade of the 1990s, note must be taken of the shortfall that still exists in the provision of early childhood care and development in the region with respect to disadvantaged groups. While three countries have apparently achieved full enrolment at the pre-school level, and others are within sight of universal early childhood education, the shortfall almost totally reflects the deficit that still remains to be eliminated in the provision of early childhood education for children from disadvantaged homes. While there can be celebration of expansion in early childhood education in the 1990s, there is still an outstanding commitment that must be met with respect to the provision of early childhood care and development to children from difficult and disadvantaged circumstances.

There is no evidence that there was any deliberate effort to expand early childhood care and development to disabled infants. This represents another deficit in the EFA efforts made in the Caribbean over the

decade of the 1990s. Expansion of early childhood education to disabled children represents another outstanding commitment that needs to be met in the future in several countries.

### Universal Access and Completion of Primary Education

In the minds of some, EFA can be equated to universal access to primary education. The target dimension set by the *Framework for Action*, however, is universal access and completion of primary education, or whatever level is considered basic, by the year 2000.

**Table 2**  
**Access to Primary Education**

Countries	Gross Enrolment Primary 1990	Gross Enrolment Primary 1998	Net Enrolment Primary 1998	Compulsory Law: Ages Under Compulsion
Anguilla	101.7	95.6	94	5-14
Antigua & Barbuda *	-	-	-	-
Bahamas	97.4	99.2	99.2	5-17
Barbados	96.7	101.3	101.3	5-16
Belize	-	101.3	88	5-14
Bermuda	100	99.5	100	5-16
British Virgin Islands	119	112	110	5-16
Cayman Islands	51.5	58.9	53.4	4.75 to 16
Dominica	100.4	98.9	88.8	5-14
Grenada	127.4	127.2	97.5	5-14
Guyana	96.9	104.2	91.9	-
Haiti	75.9	126.2	66.3	-
Jamaica	101.3	98.9	92.6	-
Montserrat	100	100	-	5-16
Netherland Antilles	109.7	109.6	103	-
St. Kitts & Nevis	102	98	89	5-16
St. Lucia	116.7	118.6	-	-
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	132	91	84	-
Suriname	-	-	-	-
Trinidad & Tobago	124.1	79.6	73.1	-
Turks & Caicos Islands	103.1	128.3	120.3	5-16

Note. \* Enrolment statistics were provided but no population data. Antigua and Barbuda, however, have had universal primary education for more than 25 years.

Table 2 shows that, in the early 1990s, all Caribbean countries, except one, either had already achieved or were close to achieving universal access to primary education. Providing universal access to primary education by the year 2000 did not appear, in 1990, as a very serious challenge in terms of providing access. Indeed, the majority of Caribbean countries had enacted compulsory education laws. Table 2 also shows that the single country, Haiti, that had a shortfall in its provision of primary education, had made significant progress in expanding access to primary education over the decade. However, at the end of the decade, approximately one third of primary school age children in Haiti were still not enrolled in school. At age six, only 49% of Haitian children were enrolled in school. Enrolment rates for each year cohort increased so that by age 10 the percentage had increased to 82%. The high gross enrolment rate relates to students being retained in primary school long after age 12. These data seem to indicate that, by the end of the decade, the majority of Haitian children would have enrolled in primary school at some time during their primary school years, but that a little less than 50% would benefit from six years of primary schooling.

In the rest of the region, all other countries have achieved, or are very close to achieving, universal primary education. Gross enrolment rates exceeded 100% and net enrolment rates are over 90% in most cases.

A curious feature of the enrolment data from Anguilla, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago is that the 1990 enrolments are higher than those in 1998. There are three plausible inferences: (a) to take the figures as they are and conclude that there has been a small decline in participation in primary education in these countries over the decade; (b) that over the decade there have been improvements in the reporting and analysis of enrolment data and that the 1998 enrolments are more accurate than those in 1990; and (c) that these data contain errors related to the private provision and population statistics previously referred to and, therefore, must be interpreted with great caution.

All three inferences can draw upon external sources for validation. For example, the Ministry of Education, Jamaica, did put into effect major improvements in its data gathering and analytic processes with respect to education statistics. At the same time, depressed economic circumstances in the country over the decade could have had a negative effect on participation in the school system. Some empirical evidence of this came from a 1994 USAID sponsored Baseline Study on the 10 to 14 age group in Jamaica which included a survey of out-of-school youths. However, the Jamaican data, like those for Trinidad and Tobago, do not include private school enrolment data. The data reported only reflect public school enrolment in circumstances in which there are well-established private providers of primary education in both countries. Previous reference was also made to the issues of declining school age populations, migration, and the possible inaccuracies in the population projections based on the 1991 censuses.

While there can be no definite conclusion, there is a fundamental difference between the three inferences. More accurate enrolment statistics is a cause for some celebration. A decline in participation in primary schooling, despite provision for same, is the cause for some concern, even alarm, when judged within the context of deliberate efforts to ensure EFA. Inaccurate population projections is a technical matter that could be corrected at the next census, due in most Caribbean countries in 2001.

**Table 3**  
**Completion and Efficiency of Primary Education in the Late 1990s**

Countries	Survival Rate to Grade 5	Internal Efficiency Grade 5	Repetition Rate	Dropout Rate
Anguilla	94	-	7.1	-
Antigua & Barbuda	-	-	-	-
Bahamas	101	101	4.0	.04
Barbados	94	87.8	7.1	-
Belize	72	76	9.6	1.3
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
British Virgin Islands	-	-	-	-
Cayman Islands	111.5	100	0.1	0.0
Dominica	89.3	86.8	3.3	0.14
Grenada	94	87.8	5.6	N/A
Guyana	90.8	83.7	3.2	7.1
Haiti	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jamaica	103.1	89.1	1.9	-
Montserrat	94	87.8	7.1	-
Netherland Antilles *	-	-	-	-
St. Kitts & Nevis	-	-	-	-
St. Lucia	104	105.9	2.3	-2.3
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	-	-	-	-
Suriname	-	-	-	-
Trinidad & Tobago	98.2	93.6	3.5	-
Turks & Caicos Islands	94	85.9	4.2	7.4

*Note. \* Rates were reported on a disaggregated basis but not for the country as a whole.*

From Table 3 it can be seen that, with the exception of Belize, close to 90% or more of students survive until Grade 5. This is a high survival rate. The high survival rates are evidence of strong commitments to education on the part of parents and students. Except for Belize, rates of internal efficiency and throughput are also quite high, upwards of 80%, and rates of repetition are low or modest. These high rates of internal efficiency are associated with automatic or social promotion that is practiced in many countries of the region. In these countries, repetition rates are low as most student progress from one grade to the next in the prescribed time.

While Belize is the exception to the Commonwealth Caribbean norm, it must be recognised that Belize organises primary education around standards, hence there is no automatic or social promotion. Promotion is based on achieving performance standards. The point to note, however, is that the fact that a significant number of children in the Belize system may not reach Grade 5 does not necessarily mean that they leave school with any lower levels of achievement from their primary schooling than children in the rest of the sub-region, given the fact that 72% survive to Standard 5 on the basis of performing to the prescribed Grade 4 standards. In other words, the fact that a higher proportion of children in the Commonwealth Caribbean reach Grade 5 on the basis of social or automatic promotion does not mean that the level of attainment on performance standards is any higher than in Belize.

While the Caribbean has more or less provided all children of school age with access to primary education and, therefore, has more or less satisfied the target dimension in terms of access, universal completion of primary education is still to be achieved. At the same time, with survival rates of 90% or better to Grade 5, this target should be within the grasp of most countries in the medium term. In a nutshell, with few exceptions, Caribbean countries are within sight of meeting the EFA target dimension of providing universal access and achieving universal completion of primary schooling.

### **Improving Learning Achievements**

From the Caribbean perspective, improving learning achievements, an aspect of quality of education, was one of the more challenging features of the EFA *Framework for Action*. Over the decade of the 1990s, several countries put in place new and additional mechanisms to measure student achievement at the primary level, outside of the selection tests that were commonly used to place children in secondary schools. For example, Belize introduced the Belize Junior Achievement Test, administered in the middle grade of primary schooling, to complement the Belize National School Examination, which is set at the end of eight years of basic education. St. Lucia introduced the Minimum Competency Tests at Grade 3 and Grade 5, the former being a diagnostic test and the latter an achievement test. Jamaica introduced the Grade 4 and Grade 6 Achievement Tests to be administered to all students in all schools at the primary level. Further, Jamaica introduced the policy that no student should be promoted above Grade 4 if they had not achieved functional literacy as demonstrated on the Grade 4 test.

Wheatley (1999), reviewing the performance of students in the primary school leaving examinations in the British Virgin Islands over the decade of the 1990s, came to the conclusion that performances at the end of the 1990s were no better than they were at the beginning of the decade. Comparative data in assessing learning achievement at the beginning and end of the decade are only available, to the author, from four countries. These data provide a mixed picture for performance in English language and mathematics. In Barbados, Bermuda, and St. Lucia, the student performance in the early 1990s was better than in late 1997 or 1998. In Barbados, in 1990, 79.1% of the primary students met the prescribed Grade 4 standard compared to 73.9% in 1997. In Bermuda, 79.1% met the standard in 1991 compared to 65.7% in 1997. In St. Lucia, 59.9% met the standard in 1993 compared to 49.9% in 1997. In Guyana, student performance in English language improved between 1992 and 1997, in that only 8% of students scored over 50% of the marks on the criterion test in 1992 compared to 34% in 1997. Notwithstanding the noted improvements, the standard achieved in 1997 cannot be considered satisfactory.

Performance in mathematics showed an opposite trend. Mathematics performance improved in Barbados, St. Lucia, and Guyana but declined in Bermuda. In Barbados, the improvement was marginal from 79.6% in 1990 to 81.8% in 1997. In St. Lucia, the improvement was more marked—from 9.9% to 27.7%. The improvement in Guyana was of a similar order to St. Lucia—from 17% scoring more than 50% of the marks on the criterion to 40% scoring more than 50% of the marks. In the case of Bermuda, mathematics performance declined from 78.9% to 71.8% meeting the Grade 4 standard.

The Cayman Islands have been using criterion reference tests to measure minimum competencies in English language, mathematics, science, and social studies since 1981. For 1998/99, these tests revealed that the prescribed levels of minimum competencies, to at least a Grade 4 level, were achieved as follows: reading and writing - 55.1%, mathematics - 43.9%, social studies - 51.6%, and science - 44.9%. No data were reported whereby comparisons could be made with similar measurements at the beginning of the decade.

Trinidad and Tobago reported the highest levels of measured achievement in primary education. Using the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) results and selecting 40% of the marks on any paper as the criterion of minimum competency, Trinidad and Tobago reported that, of the students sitting the CEE in 1999, 83.1% in reading/writing, 79.6% in mathematics, and 72.0% in social studies satisfied the minimum competency level set. Comparisons with the early years of the decade could not be made because of changes in the content of the CEE.

Given the efforts made in the EFA assessment, the fact that no more than half of the countries could make statements about learning achievement over the decade of the 1990s, using empirical data, highlights a major weakness in monitoring primary education within the region. Historically, within the region, primary education was never measured in terms of the goals of primary education itself. The measures of assessment, namely Common Entrance Examinations, were predicated in terms of selection, on a competitive basis, for placement in secondary schools. The object was to score more on the tests in order to be placed according to one's preference for particular secondary schools, without much relationship of the tests to the learning and achievement goals of primary schooling.

Over the decade of the 1990s, a shift in testing policy has occurred. The shift is towards assessing primary education in relationship to learning outcomes prescribed for this level of education. In other words, the trend has been to begin to measure learning achievement at the primary level in terms of the objectives of primary education and the curriculum taught in the schools. Some countries have implemented minimum competency tests at prescribed points in the primary school cycle while others have implemented achievement tests at the end of specified Grades, for example, Grade 4 or Grade 6. However, the mechanisms are just being put in place for this approach to assessment of primary education, and are by no means universal across the region.

A second and no less important issue is that neither the mechanisms nor the tests are standard across the region. Even within the OECS states, there are as yet no standard measures of the learning outcomes of primary education that are common to the nine countries of that grouping. As such, learning outcomes at the primary level are very difficult to compare across the region. The *Framework for Action* encouraged the setting of national standards and, implicitly, the establishment of national mechanisms to assess these standards. The question that must be asked and answered is whether there are technical, practical, financial, and human resource reasons for regional cooperation on the assessment of learning achievement at the primary level.

Yet another issue is the fact that such empirical data as are available indicate very mixed results with respect to improving learning achievement at the primary level over the decade. Of the countries from which empirical data are available, only Guyana registered improvements in learning achievements in both language and mathematics. But even here, the country started with very low levels of achievement and is still far away from desirable and acceptable minimum standards.

Against this background, it seems fair to conclude that progress in the target dimension of improving learning outcomes, an important aspect of the quality of primary education, was indeed very modest. This is not only with respect to learning outcomes themselves but also with respect to the mechanisms and the instruments to measure them. Wheatley's (1999) conclusion concerning the quality of primary education delivered over the decade of the 1990s in the British Virgin Islands may well hold true for the region as a whole; generally there was no marked decline or improvement.

### **Reduction of Adult Illiteracy, Especially Among Women**

There are some countries in the Caribbean in which literacy is not perceived as a national problem. For example, the Cayman Islands have compulsory education from age 4 years and 9 months to 16 years. Regular daily attendance is close to 90%. Minimum competency tests and the California Achievement Test, a standardised reading test, are administered annually in the school system. Based on years of

primary schooling completed, the literacy rate in the Cayman Islands was calculated as 98.0%. While the five-year *Education Development Plan*, 1995 to 1999 (1994) recognised the need for some remediation in reading, no special adult literacy programme was deemed to be necessary.

Most Caribbean countries reported on the provision of adult literacy programmes and classes in the 1990s, run by a wide variety of agencies. In some countries, for example, Guyana, these programmes and classes were run mostly by NGOs. In Guyana, these organisations ranged from religious bodies like NACOSA, an organisation of Muslim women running literacy classes for their members, and "On Wings of Words" run by the Baha'i Faith, to the Guyana Book Foundation, established in 1990 by concerned citizens worried by the problem of students leaving primary school unable to read, and Dayspring, a non-profit organisation established in 1994 to help disadvantaged youths realise their potential.

Belize is one of the few countries that mounted a government sponsored national adult literacy programme in the 1990s. A Literacy Task Force was created in 1992, which developed a strategic plan for achieving, nationally, the goal set for EFA in this target dimension. It recommended the establishment of the National Literacy Council which would be charged with executing a national literacy programme, and suggested that literacy be assessed by means of a literacy survey that would test a representative sample of the adult population. The National Literacy Council was established and, with assistance from UNICEF, a national literacy programme was launched and a national literacy survey was carried out in 1996.

In some other countries, governments sponsored the literacy programmes established in the 1970s and 1980s which continued to operate. In St. Lucia, the Adult Education and Literacy Programme, established in 1984, continued to operate but at a more modest level. In 1992, there were 38 centres operating island wide with an enrolment of 3,752 students. By 1997, the number of centres had declined to 22, with an enrolment of approximately 1,100. The decline in the number of centres and students runs parallel to the decline in financial support. When the programme first started, in addition to government financing, it also benefited from inputs from the Organization of American States (OAS), UNESCO, Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), and the National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF). Currently, the programme is funded almost entirely by the government. The adult literacy programme in Jamaica, sponsored by the government owned JAMAL Foundation, established in 1972, followed a similar path to the St. Lucian programme.

Caribbean countries are usually credited with high rates of literacy in their adult populations. For example, in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report of the 1990s*, most Caribbean countries are listed as having literacy rates in excess of 90% of their populations over 15 years old. In these reports, literacy is measured in terms of years of primary schooling. Several countries of the region also adopt this criterion for measuring literacy. The Netherlands Antilles, for example, equates literacy to the completion of three years of elementary schooling. Using this criterion, the literacy rate for the Netherlands Antilles is quoted as 95.6%, with no difference between males and females. The British Virgin Islands, also using completion of Primary 3 as its standard, calculated its literacy rate as 98.2% in 1991. St. Lucia classifies persons with no primary schooling as absolutely illiterate; those that did not complete primary schooling as functionally illiterate; those that completed primary schooling as functionally literate; and those that completed secondary education as having a literary standard. Belize classifies persons completing primary schooling as being literate.

The point being demonstrated by quoting these examples is that while some countries may be using years of schooling as a proxy for measuring literacy, there is no common classificatory system or common terminology being applied across the region, even where a common criterion, years of schooling, is being used. Indeed, the terminology used to define literacy and illiteracy in the sub-region includes *absolutely illiterate*, *functionally literate*, *semi-literate*, *peripherally literate*, *basic literacy*, and *literate*. Equating these terms is not self-evident.

In some countries, the years of schooling approach to measuring literacy has come under very serious challenge, for example, the British Virgin Islands, Belize, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. It is interesting to note the differences in literacy rates that were derived in the Caribbean from these two methods of assessment.

The national literacy survey in Belize was carried out in conjunction with the labour force survey, and tested a random stratified sample of the Belizean population 15 years or older. The sample consisted of over 70,000 Belizeans. The survey classified 30.1% of the sample as absolutely illiterate, 27.4% as semi-literate, and 42.5% as literate. In comparing the results of the literacy survey with literacy measured by

years of schooling, it was found that using the criterion of completion of primary schooling in 1996, 75.1% of the over 15 year-old population would have been classified as literate. If one combines the semi-literate and literate categories of the survey to represent basic literacy, then the basic literacy rate would be 69.9% as compared to 75.1% using years of schooling. On the other hand, if the semi-literate category of the survey was ignored, then the literacy rate, as measured by the survey, would be 42.5% as compared to 75.1% using years of schooling.

An important point to note from the Belizean experience is that whether literacy is measured by years of schooling or by means of performance on a literacy test, there were similar wide variations between different ethnic groups in the country and between rural and urban areas, and virtually no difference in the literacy rates of men and women.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the literacy rate, calculated on years of primary schooling, was believed to be around 98%. Serious doubts were cast upon this figure in the 1980s, based on the high failure rates that were being experienced in the secondary school system. The Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA) and the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), UWI, conducted adult literacy surveys in 1994 and 1995. The 1995 (ISER) survey revealed that 78% of the population 15 years and older in Trinidad and Tobago could read and write with ease, and had little or no difficulty in completing application forms, expressing thoughts, and in drawing inferences from labels and short passages of prose. A further 8.7% of the population possessed more limited reading and writing skills. Only 12.6% of the adult population was found to be illiterate. When the two categories of literacy defined by the survey are combined, 86.7% of the adult population was deemed to be literate at some level. The difference between literacy as measured by years of schooling and the administration of literacy tests was about 10 points, with the former yielding the higher figure.

Since the 1960s, Jamaica has used national literacy surveys, employing literacy tests, as the means of measuring literacy in its adult population. Since 1975, literacy surveys have been conducted on a regular basis every five to seven years. These surveys have been conducted using a 1% random stratified sample of households in the country, and measure literacy in the population 15 years and older. In the 1990s, a survey was conducted in 1994 and another was conducted in 1999. The tests in 1975, 1981, and 1987 used the same instrument and claimed to be measuring functional literacy. The test in 1994 used a different instrument and the survey was said to have measured literacy. The test of 1975 reported 68.0% functional literacy, that of 1981, 75.7% functional literacy, that of 1987, 79.8% functional literacy, and that of 1994, 75.6% literacy. Superficially, the inference could be drawn that literacy declined in Jamaica between 1987 and 1994, and that, in 1994, the literacy rate had regressed to the level of 1981. However, all literacy surveys done in Jamaica since the 1960s have shown a common pattern. That pattern is that of the age cohorts most recently out of school, 15 to 24 is the most literate while the oldest cohorts are the most illiterate, urban populations are more literate than rural populations and women are more literate than men. If literacy levels had declined in Jamaica between 1987 and 1994, one would expect that this pattern would have changed so that it would be the 25 to 34 age cohort that would be most literate. This was not the case. The cohorts most recently out of school remained the most literate.

Based on the internal consistency of the data, the most reasonable conclusions to be drawn are:

- That it is unlikely that there was any change in the literacy rate in Jamaica between 1987 and 1994.
- That the 1994 survey measured the same thing as the 1987 and previous surveys, whether that thing is called functional literacy or literacy.
- That the differences in the rates reported could be attributed to the different instruments employed in the surveys.

In the EFA Assessment, not many countries reported literacy rates for their adult population. The Barbados country report made the pointed observation that no hard data existed on this subject. Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago implemented surveys to measure literacy by testing their adult populations. Some relationships can be made between the years of schooling and the national testing approaches. In Jamaica, where such comparisons have been made between literacy measured by years of schooling and tests between 1975 and 1987, it was found that the rates reported by years of schooling were only slightly higher than those reported by tests (Miller, 1992). The 1996 Belizean comparison of 69.9% as measured by tests, and 75.1% as measured by years of schooling, replicates the findings in Jamaica. The Trinidad and Tobago experience revealed a 10 points difference.

When the costs of the two methods are compared, a 10 points difference raises legitimate questions concerning cost effectiveness. The critical question becomes, how many years of schooling most closely approximate to the rates obtained using tests administered in surveys? The data from Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica seem to suggest that six years of primary schooling may be within the range of a 10 points or less difference between the two methods. However, three instances are by no means sufficient to make any generalisation, although they may be sufficient to formulate an hypothesis that could be tested in a larger number of instances.

From the available data, it would appear that while there have been new and continued efforts in providing adults with access to education that would improve their level of literacy, there has been no marked improvement over the 1990s. Literacy levels in the Caribbean are relatively high when compared to other regions of the world, by whatever measures are used. Notwithstanding the comparative situation, there is a significant gap between the current levels and the criterion of a fully literate adult population. The available evidence does not seem to suggest that this gap was reduced by a half over the decade of the 1990s.

### **Girls, women and basic education**

With respect to providing girls and women with basic education and reducing gender disparity, the Caribbean had closed this gap before the beginning of the decade, and this position was not reversed over the decade of the 1990s. In the Caribbean, on average, girls start schooling earlier, attend school more regularly, drop out of school more infrequently, stay in school longer, and achieve higher levels of functional education at the end of schooling than boys. This pattern also holds true for adult literacy. In the Caribbean, women are more literate than men. For example, the National Literacy Survey in Jamaica in 1994 reported the literacy rate in the 15 years and older population as 81.3% for women and 69.4% for men. The gender gap in the Caribbean is the reverse of what it is in most parts of the so-called developing world. Whatever progress was made in literacy in the Caribbean, women made more progress than men and, on the whole, are more literate than men. This was the situation at the beginning of the decade and it has not changed.

### **Expanded Skills Training and Changed Behaviour Among Youths**

This target dimension stressed expansion of provisions and the inter-relationships between basic education and training and health, employment, and productivity. In order to assess outcomes on this dimension, brief mention is needed of the provisions that exist in the sub-region in this area.

The Caribbean region has a range of institutions that have been established to provide youths with essential technical and vocational skills for employment and productivity. The Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic of Barbados, the John Donaldson Technical and San Fernando Technical Institutes of Trinidad and Tobago, the Technical Vocational Development Institute of Jamaica, and vocational training centres across the region all represent the traditional state-sponsored and state-run vocational institute and centre model. SERVOL in Trinidad and Tobago is a unique NGO targeting the grassroots level of society. It offers skills training to adolescents who have dropped out of school, integrates the community into its operations, and offers an adolescent development programme aimed at building self-esteem. The SERVOL model has been recognised internationally and has been copied in other parts of the world. HEART/NTA of Jamaica is an example of a national training agency supervising, consolidating, and coordinating an entire technical vocational sector. Its source of funding is through national taxation, and its modularised programmes emphasise employment and employability, and positive attitudes. While these institutions represent the higher levels of technical and vocational training, they are also invariably linked with the school system, and provide opportunities for youths with just a basic functional education.

The EFA evaluations from the various countries did not include data that would allow any assessment of expansion of provisions at this level. Hence, it is not possible to make any judgement concerning progress, or the lack of it, with respect to this target dimension and with respect to these institutions.

The Caribbean during the 1990s was characterised by high rates of youth unemployment and a relatively high poverty rate, some of the negative results of structural adjustment. Approximately 25 to 30% of people in most Caribbean countries have been living below the poverty line. In addition, there have been health concerns, especially with respect to HIV/AIDS and teen pregnancy. Several ministries of government, NGOs, and church groups in most countries of the sub-region have launched and operated programmes

related to training youths in essential skills for employment and improved health. While quantitative indicators are not available to assess provisions in this area, it may be instructive to give a brief summary of some of the responses in three countries.

Over the decade of the 1990s, Antigua and Barbuda did the following with respect to providing basic education and training in essential skills to youths, with a view to improving health, employment, and productivity:

- The Ministry of Agriculture operated training courses for farmers in areas such as weed management, integrated pest control, World Trade Organization (WTO) and CARICOM single market, tourism, and agriculture linkages. For fishermen, the Ministry offered training courses in safety at sea, navigation, and types of fishing.
- In the late 1980s, the Ministry of Tourism launched, and operated throughout the 1990s, the Teen Skills Programme that targeted school dropouts and trained them for jobs within the tourism sector. The programme included elements that addressed the areas of personal development, health care, and work ethics, as well as skills related to particular jobs. The programme included paying the youths a monthly stipend and placing them in jobs in the tourism sector.
- The Women's Desk, Directorate of Gender Affairs, mounted the Education Training Skills Programme which offered courses in adult literacy, pastry and cake making, clothing construction, computer studies, and craft and weaving. Over the decade of the 1990s, over 3,000 women made use of the training opportunities provided by this programme.
- The Ministry of Youth Empowerment took over and ran the Youth Skills Training Programme originally sponsored by USAID between 1985 and 1990. The programme offers entry-level training skills for jobs in a wide range of industrial and service trades. It caters to youngsters 16 years and older, especially those who did not follow the academic stream in the formal school system. Its main areas of training are in carpentry, plumbing, masonry, electrical wiring, hairdressing, and secretarial services. Up to 1995, 2,497 youths had been trained through this programme.
- The Ministry of Education sponsored the following non-formal projects and programmes:
  - The Antigua School Health Project, which targets students entering secondary schools, with the stated goal of reducing sexual risk behaviour associated with HIV/AIDS. This project was planned and operated as an after-school operation.
  - The Parenting Education Programme, designed to assist parents with such matters as communication in the family, good nutrition, parent/child relationships, violence in the home, supervision of children, and involvement in the education of their children. A two-volume manual was produced and used in the delivery of the courses.
  - The Health and Family Life Education Project, designed to equip individuals to lead effective lives within the family and wider society. The project has several sub-components including a school programme, a community programme, peer counselling, a special youth programme targeted to school dropouts, and an annual Health Fair.
  - The Golden Opportunity Programme, originally designed to assist girls who had dropped out of schools because of pregnancy to continue their education. Currently, the programme also includes boys who have dropped out of the school system.
  - The Evening Institute, designed to give a second chance to those who had not completed their technical/vocational training. The programme covers a wide range of vocational training, including the creative arts, crafts, construction skills, welding, automotive skills, and information technology. It caters to a wide cross-section of the community and its programmes are highly subscribed.
  - The National Technical Training Centre, which has a capacity for 650 students and offers pre-vocational training to students in the 12 to 16 year-old age group. The centre has four departments: Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Art and Craft, and Business. It was built from funds from the British Development Division and began operations in April 1995. The centre serves students from eight primary schools and offers 3-year programmes spanning Grades 7 to 9.

While the intention and assumption of these programmes are that they will have a positive influence on health, employment, and productivity, the impact of these programmes in facilitating employment and improving productivity is still to be assessed.

The Bahamas established a Youth Consultative Commission that reported its findings in 1994. The Commission recommended that preparation of youth for the 21st century required collective and cooperative interventions from both government and NGOs. The following are some of the programmes being offered to youth in the Bahamas:

- Junior Achievement Bahamas, which offers youth the opportunity to explore the rewards and responsibilities of business systems through learning by doing.
- The Youth Enterprise Project that attempts to equip youth with skills for self-employment and entrepreneurship.
- Operation Redemption, to provide unemployed, out-of-school, and at-risk young men with self-employment opportunities. Young men enrolled in this programme are given courses in attitudinal development, entrepreneurship, and marketing and business skills. The range of economic activities includes landscaping, car wash and maintenance, and home maintenance.
- Fresh Start Programme, which provides training for employment. Its objectives are to train young people to become skilled in job search procedures, foster discipline, encourage good work ethics, expose participants to opportunities in the local economy, and develop a sense of pride and personal fulfilment through contributing to their communities.
- Volunteers 2000 trains volunteers to develop and undertake new community based projects, works in conjunction with the judicial correction system to instill a sense of community and service to persons in care, and matches volunteers with organisations and programmes that require their assistance.
- YEAST, a programme designed to assist young men having difficulty with the school curriculum or high school dropouts. The programme is designed to help young men develop self-esteem and technical skills.

St. Kitts and Nevis took a different approach from either Antigua and Barbuda or the Bahamas. St. Kitts and Nevis established the Non-Formal Youth Skills Centre for students leaving secondary schools but unable to find employment, employed persons wishing to extend their knowledge in the same or another field, and for persons who had been incarcerated. Training is offered in a wide range of skill areas ranging from the repair of small engines to tailoring. The Division of Adult and Continuing Education of the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College also offers courses of a similar nature to those offered by the Youth Skills Centre and caters to a similar clientele. Courses offered include floral arrangement, computer studies, reading blueprints, and catering.

The cases of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, and St. Kitts and Nevis are by no means unique. Most Caribbean countries continued programmes that had been previously established to provide youth with basic technical and vocational skills for employment, and expanded provisions in this target dimension during the decade of the 1990s. The objective was some expansion; no precise quantity was specified. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that most Caribbean countries met their obligations with respect to this aspect of this target dimension of the EFA Framework.

However, the objective of positive impact on health, employment, and productivity is an entirely different matter. The issues involved go far beyond whether Caribbean countries met their obligations within this target dimension of EFA. For example, with respect to employment, stagnant economies experiencing low or no growth and the contraction of jobs in both the private and public sectors have had a far more profound effect on youth unemployment than could be attributed to provisions of basic education. The fact that youth unemployment has remained high throughout the decade has to be attributed to poor performance of economies and not to any failures in educational provisions. Any attempt to attribute high levels of youth unemployment to education, basic or otherwise, is nothing but passing the buck and blaming education for the failures of the economy.

Equally profound is the fact that during the decade of the 1990s, the traditional model of work changed sufficiently to make it no longer relevant. The traditional model of work has been to divide work into low-skill, discrete tasks. The new model of work that is emerging is that of computer integrated workplaces, in which the entire production process from initial design through marketing to final sale and supporting services, including maintenance, is integrated through information technologies. The average worker in this new workplace is required to have a sound general education and skills that were never required in the past. It is fair to say that language proficiency and communications skills, mathematics, a good grounding in scientific principles, and an understanding of the social sciences provide the best vocational preparation in today's world. In the past, education of this type would have been classified as liberal and not vocational.

To put it bluntly, work at the end of the 20th century is qualitatively different from how it was conceived two decades earlier. Basic technical skills, related to old technologies, given to youths with only basic education seem woefully short of today's requirements at the workplace. Such education and training could not be expected to improve productivity even if it led to increased levels of employment.

The point, therefore, is that even if Caribbean countries have met their obligations in this target dimension, the impact desired at the beginning of the decade would not have been achieved. This is because of profound qualitative changes in the nature of work that the EFA *Framework for Action* did not anticipate. To put it bluntly, developments leading to profound changes in the nature of work, which were evident in the 1980s, rendered the objectives of this target dimension obsolete at the end of the 1990s. Basic education, understood as primary level education, can no longer be directly related to economic productivity. It is tertiary education that now carries with it the comparative advantage in wealth generation and productivity. This target dimension requires radical rethinking in a context in which it is technology and knowledge that are the principal components of wealth generation and productivity.

### **Better Knowledge for Living Through all Education Channels With Effectiveness Assessed in Behavioural Terms**

This target dimension proved to be more than just idealistic. No instruments, qualitative or quantitative, were developed to measure it. Without instruments of measurement, assessment of progress, or the lack of it, in this target dimension is nigh impossible, to say the least. Given its ambitious and ubiquitous nature, in the first place, it seems fair to say that the first challenge posed is that of operationalisation and measurement, and that these have not been addressed over the decade.

Within the Caribbean, during the 1990s, a virtual revolution took place in the deregulation and diversification of the electronic media. The number of radio stations in the region more than tripled. Cable television made a dramatic entrance and soon became widespread in many countries of the region. Community newspapers sprang up across the region. The moot question is, has this virtual explosion in access to media and, therefore, to information led to any better knowledge for living and more effective behaviour in behavioural terms? When looked at critically, this target dimension assumes an almost linear and causal link between knowledge and behaviour that has not yet been established empirically. At the end of the decade, the region is nowhere nearer being able to address this target dimension realistically. If its essential notions are to be carried forward, then substantial reformulation is necessary. A critical area to be addressed is, in practical and specific terms, how would anyone know that the objectives set in this area have been achieved?

### **New Developments and Initiatives Since Jomtien**

Since the World Conference in Jomtien, there have been at least two unexpected developments and one new initiative in the Caribbean that have had profound implications for EFA. The two new developments have been the growth and diversification of the use of information and communication technology as applied to both learning and management in schools, and increased frequency of natural disasters within the region. The new development is that of the recently accepted sub-regional strategy for early childhood education. While information and communications technology has had a positive impact on some EFA goals, and promises even more, natural disasters have occasioned setbacks. At the same time, the Caribbean Early Childhood Education Strategy is pioneering new frontiers of educational development and, therefore, setting new challenges. Each of these requires some brief elaboration.

## **Information Technology and EFA in the Caribbean**

At the time of the World Conference, computer-assisted instruction was seen to have a potential to improve reading and numeracy, but the position taken by several donor agencies and governments was that, from the standpoint of cost effectiveness, this technology was outside the reach of the so-called developing world. The increasing power of the computer which expands its power as a learning tool, the decreasing price which makes it more affordable, the explosion of the Internet, and the growth of multi-media were not foreseen by many. Equally important to its role as a tool of learning and as an instrument of work, led by the computer, information and communication technology has become the symbol of progress and modernisation. As such, it has acquired the power to mobilise widespread and grassroots support.

An equally important fact is that the *World Declaration and Framework for Action* promoted increased partnership in the delivery of basic education. Partnerships with business and community groups were particularly encouraged. Many governments developed policies that encouraged partnerships, especially from the perspective of broadening financial support for basic education, particularly in circumstances where governments were hard pressed for funds for education.

Many of the new partners brought with them their own agendas, which included supporting the use of computer-assisted and computer-based instruction in schools. The motivations included enhancing the capacity of schools to improve literacy and numeracy, the enrichment of learning, promoting computer literacy, exploring the possibilities of the Internet, and making on-line links with schools and students in other parts of the world.

By the end of the decade, therefore, almost all Caribbean governments and all the agencies providing developmental assistance had developed policies to employ information and communication technology as part of the strategy to improve the quality of learning and instruction in schools, as well as their management. In this regard, the most comprehensive and spectacular initiative in the Caribbean has been that of the EduTech 2000 policy initiated by the government of Barbados, which proposes to spend US \$175 million to modernise all schools and colleges in information technology over a 10 year period. The training of teachers and education officers in the use of information technology in education is one of the four main areas of focus of this programme which was launched in 1998.

Another outstanding example has been that of the Jamaica Computer Society Education Foundation, an NGO, established in 1990, that has become the organiser and leader of bottom-up reform in the Jamaican education system, through promoting the use of computer-assisted and computer-based instruction in primary and secondary schools in Jamaica. Two strategies developed by this Foundation are worthy of note: (a) the Foundation promoted partnerships in providing computer labs for schools; the schools provided the labs plus 20% of the cost of the equipment; while business partners and HEART/NTA, a government statutory body, each provided 40% of the cost of the equipment; and (b) the Foundation developed the cluster concept, where a secondary school or college with highly developed capabilities in information technology took responsibility and leadership, and provided technical assistance in the use of computer-mediated instruction to the primary schools within its locality.

From the perspective of the EFA *Framework for Action*, the application of information and communication technology to the delivery of basic education has been one of the unplanned and unanticipated developments since Jomtien. Unlike some other unplanned developments, information and communication technology is both positive and welcomed.

## **Increased Frequency of Natural Disasters**

While hurricanes have been a recurring feature in the Caribbean, the number of hurricanes making landfall in the sub-region increased significantly in the decade. In the case of Montserrat, the island was not only hit by several hurricanes but also had the experience of a volcano which was not known to be active suddenly give signs of activity and then erupting, to disastrous effects.

These natural disasters have set back basic education for several reasons: (a) schools are invariably one source of instant shelter for those made homeless by the disaster. This, together with students made homeless or whose homes are damaged, leads to disruption in the delivery of basic education; (b) these natural disasters usually destroy or damage schools that have to be repaired or replaced. This not only causes disruption but absorbs resources that would otherwise have gone to educational development.

Governments, on the whole, act as their own insurers and, therefore, bear the brunt of replacing and repairing schools damaged by these disasters; and (c) natural disasters not only deplete the resources of countries but also of donor agencies rendering assistance.

Natural disasters introduce a caution against the view of educational progress being conceived as linear and irreversible. They introduce an element of uncertainty in educational planning. In small states with open economies that are vulnerable to adverse global trends, natural disasters add yet another element of real risk to educational development.

### **Early Childhood Education Strategy: Redefining *All***

The history of education can be rewritten in terms of the redefinition of *all*, starting with “all freed men” to the *World Declaration* in 1990, which constituted the most inclusive definition of *all* that has yet been proclaimed and accepted. The *World Declaration* included all children and adults, of both genders, of all nationalities, of all races, classes, and types of challenges. However, it had certain age limitations. It applied its universal imperative to primary school age children and encouraged increases in enrolment in pre-school education.

To date, pre-school or early childhood education has been redefined as education given to children between the ages of 3 or 4 and 5 or 6 years, depending on whether the former or the latter mark the beginning of primary schooling. The period birth to three years was not included in the imperative.

In 1997, the governments of the Caribbean, with the assistance of UNICEF, adopted a strategy that defined early childhood as the period from birth to eight years. The strategy also included the imperative to provide all children within this age range with appropriate education. The point is that this definition of early childhood and the imperative to provide all with appropriate education extends the boundaries of *all* beyond the *World Declaration*. The challenges here are quite new and novel in that it is mothers in their homes, nurseries, and day care centres who are the main educators of infants of this age. The provision of appropriate education to this age group cannot presume an institutional framework as standard, as the majority of infants are generally cared for in their homes. Further, the caregivers are not professional educators.

The point is that the sub-region foresees, in the near future, universal provision for children in the 3 to 6 years age group. In addition, the importance of early stimulation of infants is being increasingly recognised as being critical to the long-term development of children. Further, demand for day-care is increasing as the family structure of the region continues to change. Birth to three years has become one of the new frontiers for educational development and provision in the Caribbean for the first decades of the 21st century.

### **EFA in the Caribbean at the End of the Decade**

There can be no doubt that, over the decade of the 1990s, a great deal of effort was made in the Caribbean with respect to expanding and improving basic education. Governments sought loans, were the recipients of grants, and committed their own resources in this regard. In addition, parents, communities, the private sector, and the NGOs all made their own contributions.

As a result of these efforts, even with the cautions and caveats made with respect to the fact that available data may underestimate accomplishments, real progress was made in the sub-region in expanding access to early childhood education. Several countries now offer pre-school education to all children between the ages of three and six years. In addition, several countries are within sight of universal pre-school education. The sub-region has made sufficient progress with the pre-school group as to have the confidence to begin to tackle early intervention strategies for infants from birth to three years.

All but one country in the sub-region had achieved universal primary education at the time of Jomtien. The country that had not yet achieved this milestone made considerable progress over the decade despite major hurdles. While that country still has a long way to go, however, the fact of progress over the decade cannot be denied.

The target dimension within the *EFA Framework for Action* does not only include access to schooling but completion of the primary school cycle. While several countries in the sub-region have very high rates of completion of the primary school cycle, universal completion of primary schooling has not yet been achieved. There is a small but significant amount of dropout of the primary school system. This is a commitment that the sub-region still has to meet.

Countries practicing automatic promotion have had high levels of throughput, completion, and are, therefore, efficient. However, their level of effectiveness is another question when judged by the fact that a noticeable proportion of students completing the primary cycle are not functionally literate or numerate. Indeed, countries practicing promotion based on the achievement of specified standards have higher repetition rates and lower completion rates in the prescribed time. At the end of the decade, countries practicing automatic promotion have been reviewing and modifying that policy to include standards to be achieved at the end of Grade 4 and Grade 6. Countries using merit as the basis of promotion have been under some pressure from the international community to modify this policy by not applying it to every grade level.

Considerable efforts have been made to improve the quality of basic education in the sub-region. Interventions have included the following:

- Improving the physical plant and facilities in schools. Many primary schools in the sub-region have been refurbished or replaced.
- Upgrading the quality of the teaching force by increasing the proportion of professionally qualified teachers and by improving teaching skills through in-service training.
- Providing textbooks in the core subjects of the primary curriculum, as well as other curriculum and teaching materials.
- Providing school meals, especially to children from poor homes.
- Improving the management and supervision of schools.  
Upgrading and improving assessment procedures.

Despite these efforts, at the end of the decade, it is not possible to conclude that the quality of primary education has improved. This is principally because of the lack of systematic efforts to monitor and measure the impact of the interventions that have been implemented. While the quality of primary education may have improved, there is no hard evidence on which such a conclusion could be based. At the same time, many would claim deterioration in standards. However, there is also no hard evidence that would sustain this position. In the absence of systematic and comprehensive efforts to monitor quality, using empirical data, the jury is still out on this question.

Such evidence as is available suggests that, with respect to all areas of basic education, there are regional disparities that work to the disadvantage of rural or Family Island residents. Boys and men are the second sex in basic education in the Caribbean. Boys start school later, attend more irregularly, repeat more grades, drop out more, have lower rates of completion, and achieve less than girls. Women are more literate than men.

The Caribbean had included secondary education as part of basic education. Unfortunately there were no indicators measuring progress at this level of education. The point is, however, that considerable progress was made in increasing access to secondary education in the Caribbean over the decade of the 1990s. Half of the countries of the sub-region now offer universal secondary education to students between the ages of 12 and 17 years. All other countries, but one, provide more than 50% of this age cohort with at least five years of secondary schooling (see Appendix 2). Indeed, some of these are within sight of universal secondary education and have included this as an objective to be achieved early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Adult literacy has not been seen as a problem area in several countries of the Caribbean. This is particularly so in small countries with universal primary education, and very high rates of completion of six years of primary schooling and at least three years of secondary schooling. To date, there has been some complacency about literacy levels that are believed to be high. In other countries, this complacency has been challenged and programmes have been implemented to address adult illiteracy. In this regard, programmes in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago have reported some amount of progress. Problems with the definition of literacy, including specifying the target age group involved, have beset efforts to compare and assess progress in the region.

EFA has focused more on providing educational opportunity than on participation and the participants. There is some evidence that, over the decade of the 1990s, participation may have weakened in some segments of Caribbean society. It would appear that poor families, making their own assessment of the private rates of return on their investment in their children's education, have concluded that those siblings not doing well in school may not be worth the investment. They are, therefore, investing in those children most likely to succeed and paying less attention to the others. As a result, the participation of those children in the school system has weakened. Such students now drop out and drop into schools in cycles that now give new meaning to these terms. In addition, children seeing well-educated parents, relatives, and siblings losing their jobs for reasons that are not directly related to their performance are increasingly less motivated to strive to achieve in school.

Improved provision of basic education in the Caribbean that does not take account of why parents and students access educational opportunities could place the Caribbean in the same dilemma as the so-called developed countries. One of features of Caribbean education has been the strong and vibrant degree of participation and motivation of parents and students. It is this human factor that accounts for the fact that, with far less resources, basic education indicators of most Caribbean countries overlap with those of the industrialised countries. Any sign of weakening of participation and motivation on the part of parents and students should be a cause for concern and should be addressed specifically and promptly.

### **Challenges in Basic Education Facing the Caribbean for the 21st Century**

There are at least 10 major challenges facing Caribbean countries as they seek to meet their outstanding obligations and commitments to basic education for children, youths, and adults. These challenges can be outlined briefly as follows:

- Overcoming the limitations of the existing organisation, existing human and financial resources, and traditional technology. It would appear that Caribbean countries are close to the limits of the level of participation and performance that could reasonably be expected of basic education delivered by its existing organisational structure, existing financial and human resources, and with the traditional technology. The vast majority of Caribbean countries have levels of provision of, and participation in, basic education that are far beyond those associated with middle income countries. Further, it would appear that when inputs or outputs are compared, Caribbean countries are efficient users of resources in the provision of basic education. In the EFA assessment that was done by UNESCO, which compared levels of provision with levels of performance and participation, Jamaica ranked number 1 and several other Caribbean countries ranked in the top 20 of the 89 developing countries that were included in the assessment. It would seem that the existing organisation of primary schooling, the existing levels of training of teachers, the existing use of traditional instructional technology, and the existing financial provision cannot be expected to advance the quality of basic education much further. For Caribbean countries to achieve higher levels and quality of participation and performance, new paradigms of school organisation, better prepared teachers deployed in more creative ways, new technologies applied to instruction and management, and additional resources are needed. This represents fundamental changes in basic education in the sub-region compared to its structure and organisation over the last 160 odd years of its history. Some countries have already embarked upon elements of a new approach. The Bahamas has begun to train all new recruits to the teaching profession through a bachelor's degree programme. Jamaica has reformed the primary curriculum so that the first three years are integrated around language and number learning; separate subjects begin to be introduced in Grade 4. Barbados has begun to use information and communication technology in both management and instruction in all primary schools, public and private. What will be needed is a comprehensive approach that combines new levels of teacher preparation with the use of information technology, new approaches to school and curriculum organisation, and new paradigms of assessment. Such an approach will, of necessity, require greater levels of financial support.
- Improving the status, conditions of service, and motivation of teachers. Apart from students, teachers are the most important elements in the education enterprise. Reforms in education that conceive of teachers only as agents and instruments and not as subjects and professionals start out with a great impediment. The advancement of basic education must also include the advancement of the teachers of this level of education. In the Caribbean, public primary school teachers have invariably been the most able and ambitious offspring of the less privileged segments of the society. Measures to lift basic education to new levels must, of necessity, include

strategies to advance and enhance those who teach at this level. At the beginning of the 21st century, in the Caribbean, this means advancing the status of primary school teachers by training them through degree programmes, improving the working conditions in primary schools, offering them career long professional training, and creating a career path which allows young teacher to advance and remain in the profession throughout their careers. Alongside measures to advance the status of teachers must be efforts to challenge and inspire teachers to take up the mission of building Caribbean society, consistent with notions of the ideal, just, and rights based communities, and also of the ideal Caribbean person. Accordingly, teachers and their organisations should be intimately involved in the design and development of policies and programmes intended to advance human resource development, including EFA, in the sub-region.

- Enhancing the data management capacities in the sub-region for measuring and monitoring progress towards EFA targets set for providing basic education in countries in the sub-region. Caribbean educational systems are well-developed and mature systems that have already made substantial progress towards EFA goals. The task for meeting outstanding obligations involves targeting specific groups within the various countries that have been under served or partially excluded. Data are critical to proper diagnosis of problems faced by these groups and for the analysis of such progress as they have made. For many of the challenges facing basic education in the Caribbean, it is technical expertise that is needed and not missionary zeal. The end-of-decade assessment of progress towards EFA goals highlighted the fact that, despite the great efforts made and the reasonable accuracy of educational statistics on public education in this sub-region, there are several weaknesses that must be remedied. These weaknesses all contribute to error in the statistics collected and indicators employed, and dilute their usefulness. The main weaknesses are the failure of some public schools to report to the Ministry of Education each year, double enrolment of students resulting from internal movements within the education system, the paucity of statistical information on private provision of education in Ministries of Education in several countries, and the increasing inaccuracy of population projections in the years between censuses, especially in the later years. Information technology, through the use of educational management information systems, can readily remedy the accuracy and consistency of reports from schools to Ministries of Education. The inclusion of private schools in such systems can greatly increase the quantity and quality of the data collected by Ministries on private schools. With respect to matching educational statistics to population data in deriving several indicators, what may be most feasible would be to carry out EFA assessment exercises in the years in which national censuses are taken. In other words, future EFA assessments in the Caribbean should be done in census years, that is, in 2000/2001 and 2010/2011. In this regard, for the sake of the baseline with respect to EFA goals, a special retrospective analysis should be done on 1990/1991 when censuses were last done throughout the sub-region. Consideration should also be given to establishing a sub-regional database on educational statistics which all countries and agencies could maintain and support.
- Enhancing the quality of the learning environment and the richness of learning experiences to which infants, children, adolescents, and adults are exposed in the delivery of basic education. The Caribbean has done much to provide schooling in basic education. The challenge of the 21st century is to substantially lift the quality of the learning environment and to enrich the learning experiences offered in the public and private provision of education. Such initiatives and programmes must, of necessity, impact educational practices in schools, non-formal programmes, and homes. Teachers, parents, and communities need to cooperate and collaborate in the challenge of meeting basic learning needs in ways that are pedagogically sound, stimulating, and intriguing to learners, and with roots in their lived experiences.
- Establishing quantitative and qualitative standards and a system of accountability for basic learning needs of children and adults. Such standards and targets should include input standards to be met by Ministries of Education, context standards to be met by parents and communities, process standards to be met by principals and teachers, and output standards to be met by students. What is advocated here is a system of mutual accountability in which Ministries of Education; parents and communities; principals and teachers and their associations; and students hold each other mutually accountable for the areas for which they have responsibility in the provision of basic education (see Appendix 1).
- Motivating students and parents in the current socio-economic climate. Structural adjustment, in the face of globalisation and liberalisation of Caribbean economies, has produced massive layoffs

of well-educated people in the public and private sectors. Further, it has led to increasing unemployment of successful graduates of tertiary institutions and high schools. These circumstances have the potential to depress motivation among students in schools. Already, there are signs that some youngsters are not embracing schooling in the same enthusiastic manner as was customary. There are also signs that, in the depressed economies, parents faced with scarce resources are investing mainly in their children who are most likely to succeed in school and are neglecting the education of those that are perceived as not likely to succeed. Positive and deliberate strategies will need to be employed to motivate parents to send all their children to school and to give them the necessary financial and moral support. Similar strategies will also need to be applied to students.

- Delivering basic education to adults and measuring its quality. Almost all Caribbean countries have populations with declining live birth rates and, at the same time, baby boom cohorts that had stretched countries beyond their limits to provide adequately for them while they were in school. Given the high life expectancy and the demographic features cited above, it will be imperative for Caribbean countries not only to provide literacy training but also primary education to the few who did not receive it, the larger number that did not complete it, and the many more who did not achieve the functional standards desired of basic education. There will be the demand to provide primary education for adults that is appropriately certified when the functional standards are achieved. This will be important to adults who want to continue their education from where they left off in school. What will be required is primary education delivered by way of adult education methods supported by materials designed for adult learners and which ends in formal certification. The point is that adult education conceived as literacy training is too narrowly focused when compared to the Caribbean reality. What is needed is a broader approach, within the framework of continuing education that picks up where persons left off in their formal schooling. Far more persons in the Caribbean leave primary school literate than illiterate. Most of the literate school levels desire to continue to their education but have very limited opportunities to do so. Programmes should be so structured as to allow persons to re-enter the education system as adults, from the point at which they exited primary or secondary schools as children or adolescents.
- Harmonising and standardising basic education across the Caribbean. There are four compelling reasons to harmonise and standardise basic education across the sub-region:
- The increasing complexity of the support services needed to deliver basic education to all children and adults and the small sizes of Caribbean countries combine to dictate regional pooling of human resources in particular. The cost of small, unique, and high quality school systems is quite likely beyond the reach of economies challenged to afford such systems. A standardised system would facilitate regional pooling and sharing of scarce human resources and create economies of scale that would make the indigenous production of books and learning materials more feasible.
- The stated intention of Caribbean governments is to create a common market in the region, promote regional integration, and allow free movement of people, beginning with university graduates. In this regard, the policy adopted by the OECS countries recommends itself to the sub-region. That policy is that of harmonising and standardising education within the sub-region, beginning with primary education. From a practical standpoint, such a policy would allow children moving from the school system in one country to be able to fit into the school system of their chosen country of residence with little or no disruption in their education.
- The need to establish sub-regional content in basic education that would serve the purposes of promoting a common Caribbean identity, Caribbean solidarity, and of increasing the sub-regional capacity to compete in the emerging globalising markets of the world.
- The desirability of common sub-regional targets, objectives, and standards by which basic education could be measured and monitored. One could expect that, in a sub-region where there is free movement of people, one of the concerns of parents and students would be the state and quality of education in the different countries of the sub-region. Decisions to stay or move from one country to another could well be influenced by concerns about the quality of educational provision in the various countries. Common standards, measured by sub-regional-wide instruments, would provide the kind of information that would be important to both governments and people in their decision-making on important issues.

- Setting targets for the achievement of universal secondary education as a part of the EFA goals for the sub-region. At Jomtien, Caribbean countries argued for the inclusion of secondary education as an integral part of basic education. The *Framework of Action* was worded to allow for such an interpretation. Since 1990, almost all Caribbean governments have made substantial investments to expand secondary education provision. Secondary education at the end of the decade is more accessible than at any other time in the history of the sub-region. Indeed, currently, 11 of the 22 Caribbean countries, that is, half, have already attained the goal of universal secondary education to students of school age (see Appendix 2). However, secondary education was not included in the EFA assessment in the sub-region. This is largely because the EFA assessment in the region simply followed the global framework, without taking account of the sub-region's declared position at Jomtien and deliberate actions over the decade. The Caribbean needs to formally define basic education to include secondary education, and to include indicators to measure this target dimension in any future EFA assessment in the sub-region.
- Strengthening and coordinating the EFA movement in the sub-region. The high points of the EFA movement in the Caribbean have been the Caribbean Consultation in 1989, the World Conference in 1990, and the end-of-decade assessment carried out in 1999. Between these events, countries have largely carried out their commitments in isolation and from imperatives arising from their own circumstances. The positive side of this is that EFA achievements at the end of the decade have come largely from forces driving basic education from within the sub-region rather than from external sources. The down side is that countries have only marginally benefited from sharing their experiences within the sub-region and with other regions. Steps should be taken to strengthen and enhance the EFA movement within the sub-regions, within existing regional mechanisms and periodic sub-regional conferences. Accordingly, EFA should become an item on the Agenda of the CARICOM/CARIFORUM Ministers of Education Meetings in order to enhance and strengthen collaboration, sharing, and cooperation at the policy level. The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) should take on the role of strengthening coordination and collaboration among agencies funding EFA activities in the sub-region. One person each from the CARICOM Secretariat and the CDB, sitting in their personal capacity, should be among the representatives of the sub-region on the EFA Consultative Forum Steering Committee. There should be tri-annual sub-regional Conferences or Consultations on EFA, starting in 2003, for the purpose of monitoring progress, sharing experiences, and addressing problems concerning EFA in the sub-region.

### **Concluding Comment**

When all is said and done, the issue of debt hangs like the sword of Damocles over many Caribbean countries. The proportion of government revenue going to paying debt, local and foreign, has risen to alarming proportions in some countries. For example, in Jamaica in the 1999-2000 fiscal year, 62 cents of every dollar of government revenue will go to debt repayment. The challenge posed by this level of debt repayment is not only the inability to respond effectively to new developments and needs, but that of being able to sustain past investments and to maintain existing standards.

Caribbean countries are not only vulnerable to the winds of international economic imperatives but also to natural disasters, mainly from hurricanes but also from earthquakes and volcanoes, as the experience of Montserrat since 1994 has shown. Montserrat, prior to the volcanic eruption, had one of the highest levels of educational provision and achievement in the Caribbean. Montserrat had achieved not only universal primary schooling but also universal early childhood education, universal secondary education, and its students consistently topped performance in the Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) examinations each year. The impact of the volcanic eruption has been devastating, to say the least.

Both economic and natural factors bring into sharp relief the fact that educational provision, participation, and performance cannot be conceived in linear terms. Progress in education can be reversed by unforeseen and unanticipated circumstance like natural disasters, as well as by factors such as economic adversity, which are more predictable given their periodicity.

The commitment to pursue progress and advancement in basic education should not be deterred by the risks that are involved but, rather, should be inspired by the obligation to afford Caribbean people their rights to access high quality education, the principal means by which they have successfully evaded the trap of persistent poverty over the last 150 years.

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## Appendix 1

### A Model of Mutual Stakeholder Accountability

Category	Areas of Performance	Responsibility
Buildings, furniture and equipment	Ministry of Education	
Appropriately trained teachers and principals		
Curriculum and instructional materials		
Textbooks in core areas		
Funds to cover operational expenses		
Effectively managed schools		
<b>Context Standards</b>	Students ready to learn	Parents & Communities
Functioning School Board		
Security of school personnel and property		
Support for school programmes		
Students healthy, well nourished and appropriately attired		
<b>Process standards</b>	Opportunity to learn	Principals and Teachers
Curriculum interpreted in relation to local context		
Variety of methods of presentation		
Grouping strategies to enhance learning		
Use of enrichment materials		
Open and positive organisational climate		
Continuous assessment		
Appropriate records and report to parents		
Use of information technology		
<b>Output standards</b>	Performance in curriculum areas	Students
Participation in community activities		
Wholesome attitudes and values		
Socially acceptable and appropriate behaviour		

*Note. From Jamaica Primary Education: A Review of Policy Relevant Studies (p. ), by E. Miller, 1997, Kingston: Green Lizard Press.*

## Appendix 2

### Secondary Education Provision in the Caribbean

<b>Universal Secondary</b>	<b>Mass Secondary (more than 50% enrolment)</b>	<b>Less than 50% Enrolment</b>
Anguilla	Antigua & Barbuda	Haiti
Aruba	Belize	
Bahamas	Dominica	
Barbados	Grenada	
Bermuda	Guyana	
British Virgin Islands	Jamaica	
Cayman Islands	St. Lucia	
Montserrat	St. Vincent & The Grenadines	
Netherland Antilles	Suriname	
St. Kitts & Nevis	Trinidad & Tobago	
Turks & Caicos Islands		

