Association for the
Development of Education in Africa

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Debt and Education in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa carries a debt burden amounting to three times the value of its annual exports. The region spends more on paying its debts than on health and education combined. In 1999, African public debt was estimated at US$235 billion. Annual debt service amounted on average to US$17 billion—the equivalent of 3.8% of these countries' GDP, 16% of their annual exports, and 35%* of education spending for all African countries.

These revealing figures clearly show that sub-Saharan Africa's external public debt is the principal barrier to the region's development. It holds back progress in all sectors, including education, by forcing indebted countries to allocate scarce resources to loan repayment rather than to the well-being of their people. Budgetary belt-tightening—of which the social sectors are the first victims—has undermined health and education systems, slowed progress toward Education for All (EFA) targets, and hampered the development of effective measures for combating AIDS.

Breaking the vicious circle of poverty

The enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative—the focus

Photo: UNICEF

Inside

of this issue of the *Newsletter*—should thus be welcomed as a chance for African countries to break out of the vicious circle in which they are caught. To date, 18 African countries have qualified for the HIPC Initiative: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, São Tomé and Principe, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Twelve others are also expected to benefit from the initiative but have not yet met all the eligibility criteria: Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and Togo.

For the 18 African countries that have reached the "decision point," it is estimated that the HIPC Initiative will "release" a sum equivalent to US$20.3 billion, or approximately 50 % of public expenditures on the education and health sectors. Such debt relief thus represents a substantial increase in resources and an exceptional opportunity for the education sector, at a time when many countries are drawing up ten-year sectoral plans with the aim of achieving Education For All by 2015.

Necessary but not sufficient

While the HIPC Initiative is a source of hope, it is not a cure-all: it is necessary, but not sufficient. As Alain Mingat and Jee-Peng Tan emphasize (see their article, pp. 3-6), this is a two-pronged issue: "The sector will, first of all, need to attract the resources drained by debt, but second and most importantly, it will need to use these resources in an efficient and equitable way." They call on countries to re-examine the very foundations of their education systems and carry out the structural changes needed to "build systems capable of producing the desired social results within a financial framework that is sustainable over the long term."

Julien Daboué (see pp. 9-11) points out that the financial resources earmarked for repaying creditors are the same resources as those that will be used to pay for social programs, and that although the HIPC Initiative eases the debt constraint on poor countries, it does not resolve all of their economic and social problems.

Mamadou Ndoye, in his account of the Sahel countries' conference on education (Bamako, November 26, 2000), stresses that "the countries' requirements greatly exceed the resources freed up by the HIPC Initiative." To reduce poverty, provide for health needs, and offer quality Education for All, countries will have to introduce appropriate policies to stimulate economic growth, improve governance, diversify sources of financing, harness local savings, and attract domestic and foreign investment capital.

There is also a need to mobilize civil society in order to enhance its involvement in the design and implementation of poverty reduction programs. David Norman's article (see pp. 7-8) pays tribute to international NGOs as devoted activists for increased morality, justice, and debt cancellation. They are now directing their efforts to supporting civil society "in order to ensure that debt cancellation will indeed serve the interests of the neediest." ❐

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* Source: Progress Reports on the HIPC Initiative and the Strategic Frameworks for Poverty Reduction. World Bank. DC/2000-10.

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Focus: Debt and Education in Africa

The HIPC Initiative:
What Will It Do for Education?

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, launched in 1996 by the World Bank and the IMF, seeks to reduce the external debt of the poorest, most heavily indebted countries by placing debt relief within the framework of a strategy for poverty reduction. Eighteen African countries[1] are participating in the initiative. To what extent can this financial largesse contribute to education? The authors urge countries to re-examine the very foundations of their education systems and analyze their shortcomings. The resources freed by the HIPC initiative can help to enlarge existing systems; however countries should also take the opportunity to bring about the structural changes needed to establish more effective systems that will yield the desired social results.

Since the early 1980s, and notably as a result of the oil shocks of the previous decade, many African countries have faced a variety of macroeconomic disorders: budget deficits, balance-of payment deficits, and inflation. These led to the formulation of structural adjustment programs with the Bretton Woods institutions. These programs, which probably underestimated the scope of the problem, started from the idea that macroeconomic equilibrium was a fundamental structural objective without which no development action would be possible. Moreover, the size of the deficits made it necessary to take vigorous action: although the financial partners agreed to contribute in the short term, they required in return that stringent economic policies be adopted by the states concerned, since such outside financing could not be provided in a sustainable way.

The limits of structural adjustment programs

While the existence of disequilibria and the need to finance them should not be neglected, these programs have been criticized on two complementary grounds. First, even after years of struggle, many countries have not managed to attain the desired macroeconomic equilibrium. Second, the programs often entailed "collateral damage" in terms of both economic growth and funding for the basic social sectors. The analyses made at the time (particularly those originating outside the international institutions involved) emphasized that these programs could not succeed as long as the countries were obliged to repay an amount of foreign debt (interest and capital) that was growing continually, owing to interest accrual, and sometimes reaching unbearable levels. The analyses also stressed that while macroeconomic equilibrium was regarded as the main objective, the only truly acceptable objective is that of human development and poverty reduction. Having expressed these criticisms, we should nevertheless point out that experience has shown macroeconomic equilibrium and growth of national output to be necessary (though not sufficient) conditions for the success of poverty reduction initiatives.

Reduce debt, alleviate poverty

This was the context of the developed countries' first debt reduction initiative, in 1996; the initiative was subsequently enhanced in June 1999 at the Cologne summit of the G7. September of the same year saw the emergence and development of the idea that the resources freed up each year through debt reduction should be invested in actions and programs aiming at substantial reduction of poverty in the countries concerned. The strategic framework for poverty reduction would be the reference document for all actions in favor of developing (or emerging) countries. The framework would be prepared locally by the government of each country, after extensive consultation with the stakeholders concerned and with civil society (the collaboration of all outside partners was considered advisable).

The country would then be offered debt relief, subject to certain conditions. In particular, it would have to: (i) meet the eligibility criteria (low per capita income, net present value of debt too high in relation to exports, annual debt service exceeding to an unreasonable degree the country's receipts from general and special taxation); (ii) have an acceptably democratic political environment (elections, press, trade unions); (iii) have achieved a minimal level of macroeconomic stability, taking account of the benefits of the initiative; and (iv) have developed and begun to implement a poverty reduction strategy.

Forty-one countries, including 33 in Africa, are considered to meet the criteria for both income level and debt burden. Four of these countries (two in Africa) are regarded as having sufficient resources (notably oil) to cope reasonably well with their debt repayment schedules, and thus have not been selected for the HIPC initiative. This lowers the number of eligible countries to 37, of which 31 are in Africa. Of these 37 theoretically eligible countries, two (one in Africa[2]) elected not to take advantage of this initiative. To date, 22 countries (including 18 in Africa) have actually entered the HIPC process. The remaining

13 countries (12 in Africa[3]) have not satisfied all the eligibility criteria and are not yet participants in the initiative.

The HIPC process and the resources involved

Once eligibility and the terms of implementation have been determined, the HIPC process is initiated by the so-called "decision point" debt reduction paper. This is a document submitted by the World Bank to its Board of Directors and by the International Monetary Fund to its Executive Board. It examines the characteristics and volume of debt relief as well as the conditions that the country will have to meet before final implementation of the initiative. This point of completion is referred to as "floating," to indicate that a certain amount of time may pass before the country fulfils these conditions, which include, among other things, the adoption of certain global or sectoral policies (good governance, decentralization decisions, decisions to hire new types of teachers or to purchase medicines, etc.). Another condition is that the country must formulate and begin to implement a poverty reduction strategy. The strategy is developed in two stages: an interim strategy to begin with, followed by preparation of a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) defining the medium-term program and the actions to be taken in the first three years. This national strategy, which will serve as the basis for the country's own actions as well as for its relations with all of its technical and financial partners, is presented to the World Bank's Board of Directors and the International Monetary Fund's Executive Board.

It may be noted that the strategic framework for poverty reduction does not apply to the HIPC countries alone: its use has been extended to all the countries that are eligible for IDA loans or that might consider this instrument applicable to their situations.

A first appraisal of the total resources freed up in the context of the HIPC initiative shows that, for the 22 countries which have reached the decision point, the initiative will reduce the total foreign debt stock by 45 %, from US$44 billion to US$24 billion. For the 18 African countries, over the 2001-2003 period annual debt service should fall (with respect to 1998) from 17% of exports to 8 %, from 3.3% of gross domestic product to 1.8%, and from 26% to 12% of government revenue from general and special taxation.

These average figures should not obscure the fact that the amount of debt relief, in both absolute and relative terms, varies rather widely from one country to another. Initial debt situations were highly varied (Zambia, for example, was much more indebted than Burkina Faso), whereas debt relief is calibrated according to indicators which, though considered acceptable for the future, are identical for all the countries. This is why some observers have expressed regret that the initiative offers less relief to those countries that have been the most careful about accumulating debt (from 2000 to 2009, cumulative debt service relief for Burkina Faso is expected to amount to US$330 million, as against US$1.8 billion for Zambia, even though the two countries have roughly the same population).

The consequences for education

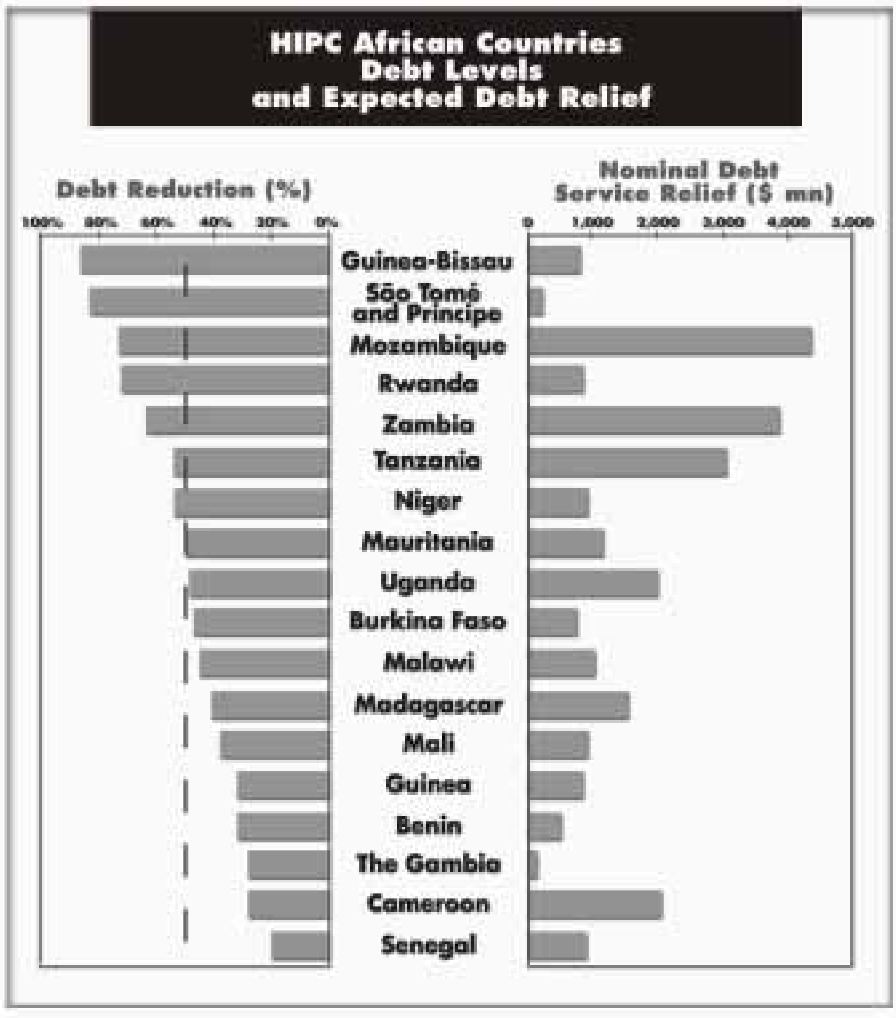
Debt service relief is intended to free up funding for programs and initiatives to reduce the incidence of poverty. Education is obviously one of the main areas affected by the initiative (along with health and rural development). To supplement the previous macroeconomic presentation, it can thus be helpful, before implementation of the initiative, to compare the amount by which debt service is reduced to the volume of public spending on the social sectors (education and health). For the 18 African HIPC countries that have reached the decision point, the reduction in annual debt service corresponds to about 50 % of public spending on these two sectors. According to the HIPC documents, the total annual volume of public expenditure for the social sectors in these countries should rise from US$2.5 billion to US$3.4 billion as a result of the initiative, an increase of 36%. Here again, however, the financial impact of the initiative can vary enormously from one country to another: debt relief would amount to only 20% of the volume of public resources allocated to the social sectors in Burkina Faso, as against 48 % in Madagascar, 90% in Guinea and Mozambique, and nearly 200% in Zambia.

Despite these great differences between countries, the majority of them are likely to allocate substantial resources to the education sector. However, it will still be necessary for the sector to demonstrate that it can contribute effectively to the objective of poverty reduction, because other sectors will inevitably compete for the resources released by the initiative. This is an exceptional two-fold challenge for the education sector: first, to obtain some of the resources made available by debt relief; second, and especially, to use them in an efficient and equitable way. The various parties supporting the initiative do not regard it simply as a financial contribution allowing the countries to increase appropriations for the social sectors (including education), but as an operation allowing them to obtain tangible improvements for their populations, in particular for the groups that are generally excluded.

Making better use of resources

Studies have shown that the educational systems of most of the African HIPC countries could make appreciably better use (in terms of efficiency and in equity) of the public resources allocated at the national level. It follows that the additional resources should not be used merely to enlarge existing systems, but rather to achieve tangible improvements for the population. This requirement applies of course to the HIPC countries themselves, but also to their development partners, which, having supported these countries for some 30 years, bear some responsibility for inefficient and inequitable use of the national resources allocated to education. The project-based approach, which tends to finance activities having only a marginal influence on the way national systems function (foreign aid amounts to less than 10% of national public financing, and even less when private contributions are taken into account) has had no real impact on education systems' fundamental structural aspects.

The current context allows a major qualitative change in the way the functioning of educational systems is approached. The HIPC initiative encourages countries to rethink the very foundations of their systems rather than to seek marginal improvements. The central idea is to induce them to determine how to use the new resources to bring about the structural progress needed. The objective is, over a 15-year period, to build systems capable of yielding the desired social results, and to do so within a financial structure that is sustainable over the long term. This requires substantial efforts in terms of functional analysis of educational systems and, in particular, analysis of the reasons why the African countries, particularly in French-speaking Africa, have had less success than their Asian and Latin American counterparts in making public resources yield tangible results for their populations and economies. These efforts are essential, both to identify the education policies to be followed over the next 10 to 15 years and to define management procedures that enable the conversion of available resources into actual results. The stimulating effect of debt reduction, in conjunction with the role played by civil society, works strongly in favor of structural decisions that would have been difficult to make under normal circumstances.



Source: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Progress Report, World Bank/IMF. April 2001.

Defining appropriate strategies

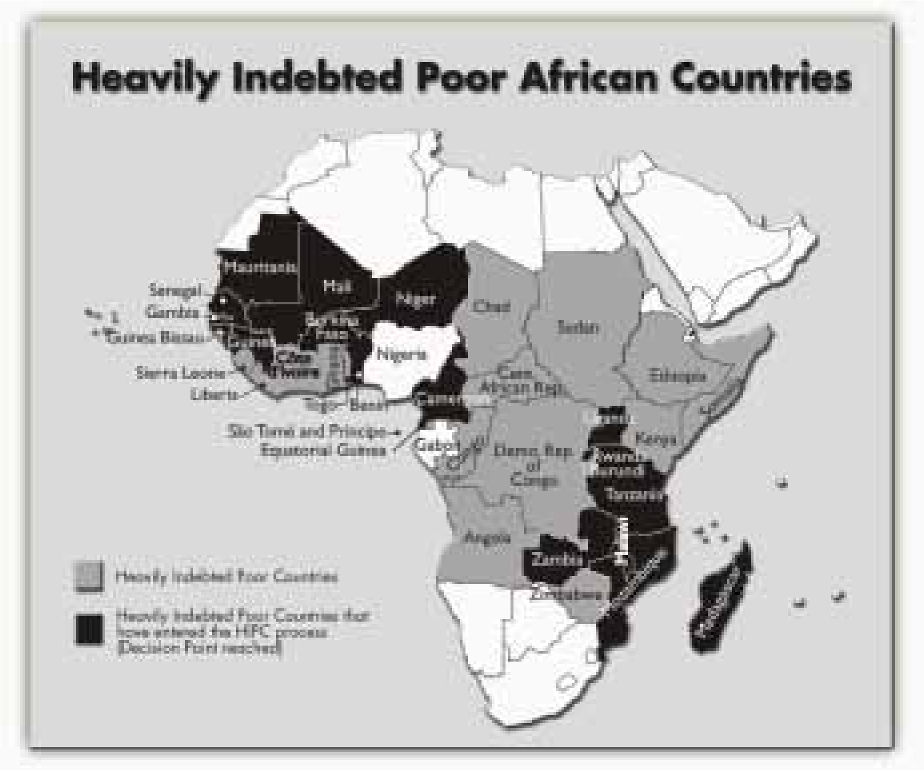
It may be helpful to conclude with a description of what seems to be a fairly widespread strategy, adopted by most of the countries participating in the HIPC initiative. We begin with two observations: (i) the main engine of poverty reduction is economic growth, which should therefore be promoted; (ii) it is important that the poorest segments of the population be able both to contribute to growth and to seize the opportunities arising from the improvement in the country's overall situation. Human capital plays a prominent role in this respect.

Where economic growth is concerned, it should be noted that the African HIPC countries are characterized by dual economies: the majority of the working population is employed in the traditional sector (including agriculture), and only a small (but increasing) proportion works in the modern sector. The sources of growth will necessarily be found in these two sectors.

In the modern sector, experience shows that growth depends first and foremost on economic policies (exchange rates, interest rates, social legislation, investment code) and that human capital has a crucial role to play. The private sector must be able to find the skilled personnel it needs, particularly graduates of institutions for technical and vocational education and higher education. Experience also demonstrates, however, that the absorption capacity of the domestic market is a major constraint, and the human capital produced in these important sources of training must therefore remain, in both quantity and quality, in line with the demand expressed by the labor market. All of the countries regard this objective of matching education to demand as difficult to achieve, but most think that it is necessary.

The extensive literature on the traditional sector emphasizes that quality primary education, involving at least five or six years of schooling, is the minimum requirement for productivity gains in this sector and for the social development of the country. Despite considerable effort, many countries still have a long way to go. At the quantitative level, this observation obviously applies not only to the Sahel countries, for which progress in this respect is essential, but also to a number of countries in which school enrolment rates are relatively high but a sizeable percentage of the population nevertheless does not complete primary schooling. For example, Mozambique, Benin, Malawi and many other countries have gross rates of primary school enrolment exceeding 80%, but it is estimated that, at most, 20% of girls in rural areas receive a full primary education. It seems in this respect that, since traditional policies targeting conventional forms of service provision have their limits, new initiatives are being considered within the framework of poverty reduction strategies. Progress is also needed at the qualitative level, because the goal is not merely to have children formally enrolled in school but to ensure that they actually learn what they are supposed to learn.

These quantity and quality considerations suggest that the objective of providing quality schooling, at least through the end of the primary cycle, will be a major component of countries' programs, particularly in the context of the fight against poverty.



Alain Mingat and Jee-Peng Tan
World Bank
Human Development-HIPC team,
Africa Region

1. Eighteen African countries have reached the "decision point": Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, São Tomé and Principe, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.
2. Ghana has recently indicated its intention to request HIPC debt relief.
3. Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, The Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)

In September 1999, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decided that the participatory strategies process carried out by countries in view of reducing poverty should serve as a basis for foreign aid and debt relief within the framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. This approach has led to the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

The basic principle underlying PRSPs is that the needs of the poor must appear in the forefront of public discussion, because poverty and inequity continue to afflict large numbers of developing countries. Each PRSP should describe: the macro-economic structural and social policies developed by a country to enhance economic growth and reduce poverty; the associated external financing needs; and major sources of financing.

The PRSP must adhere to certain principles:

- It should be country based and involve broad participation from the public and private sectors.
- It should be results-oriented, and in particular, beneficial to the poor.
- It should have a global apprehension of poverty and its underlying causes.
- It should point towards public actions which are likely to have the most beneficial impact on poverty.
- It should set up indicators for results, which will be implemented and followed through a participatory process.

For more information on PRSPs, you may consult the World Bank website at the following address:

www1.worldbank.org/psrp/

The Role of Northern-Based NGOs in Debt Relief

NGOs have done much to put the debt issue at the forefront of Northern countries' concerns. By putting a human face to the debt crisis and pleading for greater justice and human rights, they have succeeded in rallying broad public support. They have pushed governments to press for more radical debt cancellation measures. They are supporting civil society groups to ensure that these groups play a crucial role in the development, monitoring, and implementation of poverty reduction plans.

When Jubilee 2000[1] was launched five years ago, there was skepticism about the potential for international NGOs to influence the debt-relief debate. Even some international NGO staff were uneasy about how public campaigning could contribute to changes in the policies of donors and global financial institutions on an issue rooted so deeply in economic theory and practice.

Yet, by now, the terms of the debate have changed dramatically. In 2001 concrete mechanisms are in place to deliver debt relief linked closely with poverty eradication. And few would deny that NGOs have played a significant role in this transition. This article reviews the key elements of their contribution to the change.

Drawing on issues of morality and justice

The starting point of NGO advocacy on debt cancellation has always been the rights perspective, drawing on issues of morality and justice. Debt could never be a "campaignable" issue within a narrow debate about particular economic models. The rights approach personalizes debt, making the link between creditors' policies and the impact on real people—people whose stories could be told, through NGOs' close contact with community-level programs.

The rights approach complemented the religious imperative behind many of the Jubilee 2000 coalition allies. Faith groups brought with them huge constituencies of public supporters engaging in the debate on ethical terms. Emotive symbols linking debt with the history of colonialism and slavery set the terms of the media coverage, as a formerly dry economic issue became a hot story in the run-up to the new millennium.

Public campaigning turned debt into a potentially vote-winning issue for some G7 governments. Among the G7 countries, the different levels of public activism on debt correlates closely with the wide variation between their governments' willingness to press for more urgent and radical measures on debt cancellation.

NGO campaigners have been caricatured as "standing on the outside throwing bricks over the wall," in other words, relying on a populist approach of destructive criticism. But the newer, loosely targeted anger by groups questioning the entire legitimacy of the international financial system should not obscure the clear analysis at the heart of the debt campaign strategy. Of course, any campaign seeks to put pressure on decision-makers to go beyond their existing commitment, however strong that commitment may already be. But NGO campaigning has also worked through strengthening the hand of the reformers against the slower traditionalists. Raising and demonstrating public concern on the issue has created political rewards for politicians who support stronger action and has offered a new source of legitimacy for those taking a lead within international financial institutions.

So the variety of popular forms of protest reflected not only a genuine uprising of public passion about the impact of debt on poor communities but also a sense of purpose. Step-by-step changes in G7 and donor commitments were seen to be linked to changes in the political environment caused by the campaigners. The late-1999 decisions by U.K. and U.S. governments to cancel bilateral debts

Photo: Jubilee Plus

United Nations Geneva Summit, June 27, 2000.

demonstrated this link most clearly.

During the 1990s northern-based NGOs also became more sophisticated in their relations with the media. This relationship was central to making public the links between public activism, personal stories from southern communities suffering the effects of debt, and the policy actions required at international high-level meetings.

The depth of international media coverage around the Cologne and Okinawa G7 summits was no accident. Journalists had been fed analysis and stories on the impact of debt by NGOs, had been hosted by NGOs at community programs in Africa, and had been put in touch with celebrity supporters of the campaign, who were themselves thoroughly briefed by NGOs. As a result, even the entertainment industry took up the debt campaign, temporarily putting global financial issues at the heart of European popular culture.

For poverty eradication

A far more detailed, poverty-focused analysis underpinned the headline campaign messages of NGOs, which sought to change the basis of the debate, away from arguments limited to the effects of debt and adjustment programs on the economy as a whole and towards an analysis of the impact of debt on the poorest people in heavily indebted countries. NGOs' policy departments proposed specific mechanisms to translate debt relief into poverty eradication.

The link between debt cancellation and poverty eradication programs is now so well established that the history of divergence among G7 governments' and donors' positions on this could one day be forgotten. And yet, despite the successful progress of debt relief through this formula, the link remains at the heart of NGOs' critique of the debt relief process.

Advocating for excluded countries

For example, Oxfam argues that the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative is still based on criteria that respond only peripherally to human needs. Even after they receive debt relief, Zambia, Tanzania, Senegal, Mauritania, and Cameroon will continue to pay more in debt repayments than their combined budgets for health and primary education[2]. If poverty eradication is genuinely the driving purpose behind debt cancellation, then the depth of debt cancellation needs to be determined by governments' capacity to finance basic services rather than by their debt/export ratio.

Other assumptions within the current approach to debt cancellation continue to be challenged vigorously by international NGOs. With debt relief now so closely associated with hopes for meeting the 2015 international development targets, there remains no justification for excluding the many poor countries currently missing from the HIPC framework. Seventy percent of Nigeria's population live on less than one dollar a day, in a country which is Africa's largest debtor but which is excluded from the HIPC initiative.

The automatic exclusion of countries affected by conflict is also increasingly questioned. The U.K.'s decision to hold debt payments of conflict-affected countries in trust until those conflicts are resolved offers a potential model for debt relief providing a financial incentive for peace.

This has been the recurring pattern of NGO advocacy on debt: at every stage of the evolving arguments, we have asked the simple question: "Why not?" The letter-writing campaigners ask it in disbelief that the bureaucracy cannot move faster in the face of the catastrophic human cost of debt. The policy analysts ask the same question as they propose concrete alternative approaches that could break the deadlock.

NGOs have integrated debt campaigning with advocacy around other opportunities in the international arena. The Global Education Campaign, a coalition with members active in over 100 countries, approached the World Education Forum in April 2000 proposing financing mechanisms for education closely linked to a stronger debt-relief framework. Delegates at the WEF agreed to organize a "Global Initiative" to develop detailed strategies and financing mechanisms to support their education commitments: NGOs have led the pressure to move this commitment beyond paper, within the context of existing poverty-eradication processes linked to debt reduction.

Civil society must be at the heart of the process

Finally, northern NGOs have worked closely with southern networks to develop a global movement for debt cancellation. Providing the means for southern-based campaigners to bring their experience into northern-dominated decision-making forums has been one element of the support offered. Strengthening southern partners' capacity for analysis and policy work has been another.

This kind of support will be increasingly important for international NGOs in future phases of advocacy on debt. There is a clear role for southern civil society groups within the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, in developing poverty reduction plans and also in monitoring the implementation of those plans, to make sure that debt relief genuinely leads to rapid poverty eradication.

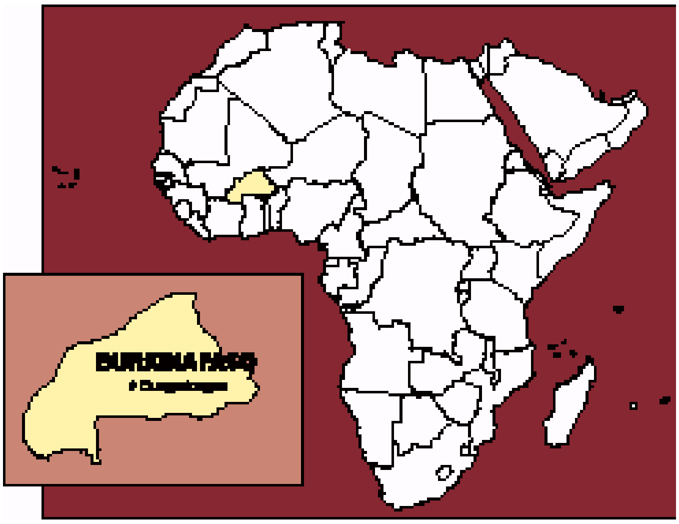
Some, such as the Uganda Debt Network, have developed a strong monitoring role within their existing campaign on debt. Other groups have found the PRSP consultation process too rapid and inflexible to enable them to contribute. International NGO support for their crucial role aims to reverse a history of externally-imposed aid conditionality. It seeks to put national civil society groups, which have some of the most important expertise to offer, genuinely at the heart of a process to ensure that debt cancellation benefits those who need it most.

David Norman
Save the Children

1. Jubilee 2000 is an international movement for the cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries.
2. Oxfam, 21tst Century Debt Relief, 1/15/2001: www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/debt.html

Burkina Faso: A Lighter and Better Managed Debt Burden

Burkina Faso was one of the first countries to benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, receiving an initial debt relief package of US$400 million in 1997. In 1999, the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted a further debt reduction of US$300 million. The combined savings provided under the HIPC Initiative cut Burkina Faso's debt service obligations by approximately half.



Like most of the least-developed African countries, Burkina Faso is heavily in debt. Its external public debt has grown substantially over the last ten years, from US$1.0 billion in 1990 to US$1.4 billion in 1999. External debt represented 89% of the country's total debt over the same period.

The country's debt stems from three sources: (i) multilateral lenders, (ii) bilateral lenders whose loans have already been rescheduled, and (iii) bilateral lenders whose loans have not been rescheduled. Of these three, loans from multilateral lenders such as the International Development Association (IDA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the regional development banks account for by far the largest share of debt: the outstanding amount of multilateral debt rose from US$563 million in 1990 to US$1.18 billion in 1999. The scale of this rise is due to the increase in the amount owed to the IDA, IMF, and Africa Development Fund (AfDF), whose lending activities increased to support the implementation of several structural adjustment programs (SAPs).

In 1999, outstanding public debt amounted to 60.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 580.8% of exports. In the same year, foreign debt service represented 18% of export revenues. These figures illustrate how large the debt burden is compared to the resources available to Burkina Faso. This situation led the authorities to develop strategies to improve their management of the country's external debt and rein it in to sustainable levels more in line with the state's resource base.

Management of Burkina Faso's debt

From 1991 to 1996, Burkina Faso adopted a policy of debt reduction, rescheduling bilateral debts, and endeavoring to have its debt cancelled if possible. At the same time, it established a number of bodies to improve debt management. These include a National Public Debt Committee (Comité national de la dette publique – CNDP) to pass judgment on all requests for funding, and a National Debt Strategy Unit (Cellule nationale de stratégie d'endettement – CNSE) to formulate and update debt strategies in the context of the HIPC Initiative. To obtain a clear view of the short, medium, and long terms, the government, with help from development partners, has acquired a tool for monitoring and evaluating public debt: the Public Debt Management and Analysis System (Système de gestion et d'analyse de la dette publique – SYGADE). SYGADE, which is currently being finalized by the Public Debt Directorate, should allow the government authority concerned with debt (the General Directorate for Cooperation, Central Bank, Treasury) to integrate relevant information, from the negotiation stage to repayment.

The HIPC Initiative in Burkina Faso

In 1997 the Bretton Woods institutions granted Burkina Faso an initial debt relief package of US$400 million. Noting the correct implementation of SAP measures, the excellent economic results recorded, and the quality of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) submitted to them, these institutions declared Burkina Faso eligible for debt relief under the enhanced HIPC Initiative. The implementation of this agreement will help release, between the years 2000 and 2007, US$700 million (about CFAF 490 billion) for all sources of debt combined; these resources will be allocated to covering the population's most pressing health and education needs. For the year 2000, the expected amount of relief was estimated at US$14.9 million (CFAF 10 billion); for 2001, it is evaluated at US$34.8 million (CFAF 24 billion).

Framing the PRSP

Preparation of the PRSP began in November 1999. Throughout this process, the PRSP was the subject of continual dialogue and consultation, first within the

Burkina Faso (1999)

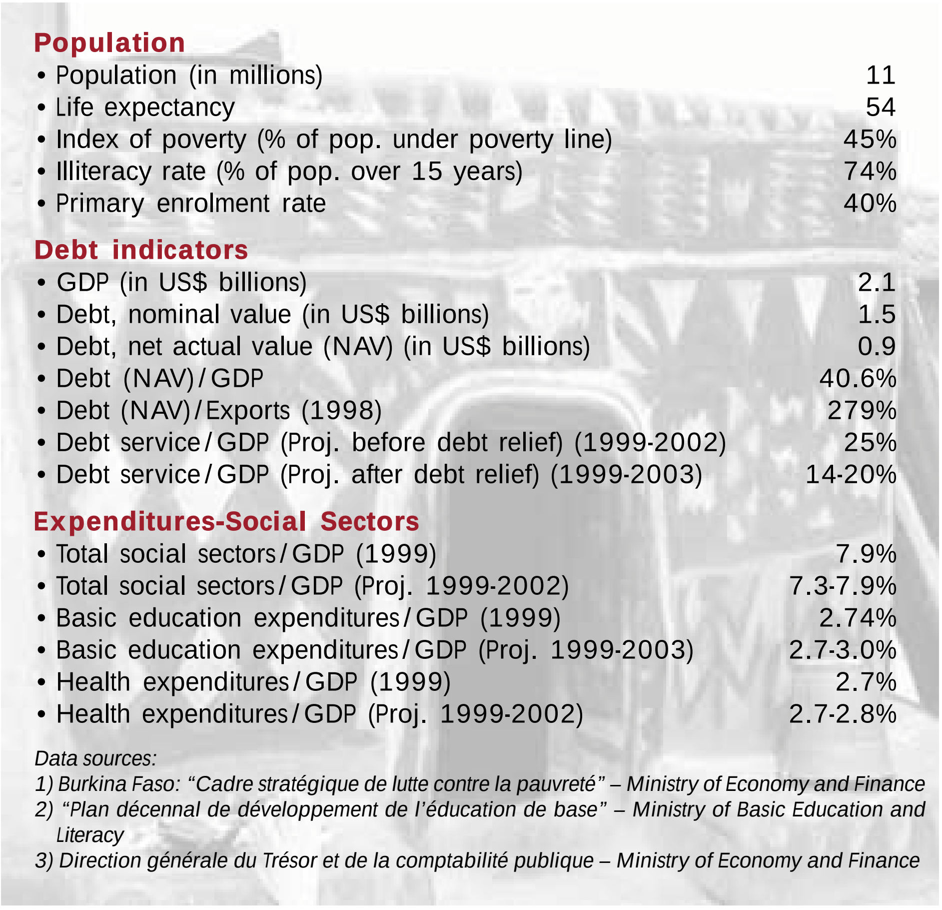


Photo: UNESCO / M. Archambault

Population

• Population (in millions)	11
• Life expectancy	54
• Index of poverty (% of pop. under poverty line)	45%
• Illiteracy rate (% of pop. over 15 years)	74%
• Primary enrolment rate	40%

Debt indicators

• GDP (in US$ billions)	2.1
• Debt, nominal value (in US$ billions)	1.5
• Debt, net actual value (NAV) (in US$ billions)	0.9
• Debt (NAV)/GDP	40.6%
• Debt (NAV)/Exports (1998)	279%
• Debt service/GDP (Proj. before debt relief) (1999-2002)	25%
• Debt service/GDP (Proj. after debt relief) (1999-2003)	14-20%

Expenditures-Social Sectors

• Total social sectors/GDP (1999)	7.9%
• Total social sectors/GDP (Proj. 1999-2002)	7.3-7.9%
• Basic education expenditures/GDP (1999)	2.74%
• Basic education expenditures/GDP (Proj. 1999-2003)	2.7-3.0%
• Health expenditures/GDP (1999)	2.7%
• Health expenditures/GDP (Proj. 1999-2002)	2.7-2.8%

Data sources:
1) Burkina Faso: "Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté" – Ministry of Economy and Finance
2) "Plan décennal de développement de l'éducation de base" – Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy
3) Direction générale du Trésor et de la comptabilité publique – Ministry of Economy and Finance

central government and thereafter among the institutions representing the population, development partners, and civil society.

Within the central government, the first priority was to brief the entire government apparatus about the process and the importance of focusing primarily on poverty reduction. An interministerial committee comprising the directors of the research and planning departments was formed and charged with analyzing the results of the survey on household living conditions, discussing the components of the debt reduction strategy, and submitting a first draft of the PRSP.

The Minister for the Economy and Finance then presented the PRSP to both houses of Parliament.

The third level of dialogue and consultation was the discussion with development partners. Two meetings were held with them in February 2000 in order to (i) exchange ideas and information on the PRSP preparation process; (ii) elicit their comments on the draft document; and, (iii) finalize the document.

The final stage was to consult civil society and other stakeholders in the field. Two regional workshops were organized in February and March 2000 in two different locations. The aim of these workshops was: (i) to inform the representatives of civil society, decentralized government departments, the private sector, and producers' associations of the results of the survey on household living conditions; and (ii) to elicit their opinions and suggestions for improving the draft PRSP.

With the help of the amendments recorded throughout this process of dialogue and consultation, the interministerial committee produced a final document that reflects a consensus on how the government should tackle poverty in Burkina Faso.

The HIPC Initiative and the financing of education

One of the main pillars of the poverty reduction strategy set out in the PRSP is increased access to education for the poor. To this end, the government adopted in July 1999 a Ten-Year Development Plan for Basic Education (2001-2010), one of the overall objectives of which is to achieve a gross enrolment ratio of 70% in 2010.

The resources released by debt relief have allowed the government to make the following commitments to implementing the plan:

- Raise the share of current education spending in the central government budget from 21.6% to 26% in 2010, while ensuring that 60% of this operating budget goes to basic education and 7% of the basic education budget to literacy training.
- Reorganize the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy to give special weight to the operational qualities of decentralized services, which are the keystones of the implementation of the Ten-Year Plan.
- In rural areas, step up efforts to construct properly equipped classrooms, teacher housing, and latrines, set up canteens in all schools, and install water outlets in new schools.
- Put in place economic projects that target adult women and accompany their education.
- Exempt parents of girl pupils in the 20 provinces with the lowest enrolment ratios from annual parent contributions.
- Continue the policy of free distribution of textbooks at the primary level.
- Expand post-primary education via the construction of lower secondary schools offering general education in rural areas.

The real impact on education

In view of the rules governing debt relief under the HIPC Initiative, one may feel skeptical about the actual impact of such relief on funding for education.

The reason is that, on completion of the provisions of the agreements signed, the resources initially earmarked for repaying creditors must be paid into a special account to fund programs in the social sectors, including education. The same causes have the same effects, says the proverb. The accumulated arrears on the debt unquestionably reflect poor countries' inability to meet their financial commitments. That being the case, it may be asked whether they will be able to mobilize resources to allocate to the social sectors.

In addition, the terms vary depending on the creditor. Most of the multilateral creditors have agreed to either debt buy-backs, or assumption of debt service, in the form of debt rescheduling of concessional loans to refinance debt. Moreover, estimates of the resources expected from implementation of the agreements assume the participation of all the country's creditors. However, where the multilateral partners are concerned, agreements have been signed with only four of twelve lenders involved in this process. It is thus impossible to know the exact amount agreed to by each creditor, and as a result it is difficult to plan the use of the expected additional resources, both in the budget and in the execution of sectoral programs. In 2000, for example, the amount of such resources fell from about CFAF 10 billion to CFAF 7 billion, and consequently the share allocated to education was reduced as well. Ultimately, the main concerns have to do with: (i) the manner in which debt relief is to be financed; (ii) the amounts that will actually be granted by each creditor; and (iii) how these amounts will be paid. It should be noted that the total cost of the Ten-Year Plan, which is still being assessed, amounts to more than CFAF 300 billion, or approximately US$428 million.

Conclusion

The HIPC Initiative rounds out the range of instruments developed by the international community to resolve the debt problems of the low-income countries. Although it does provide poor countries with some relief of their debt burdens, it is not the solution to all of their economic and social problems.

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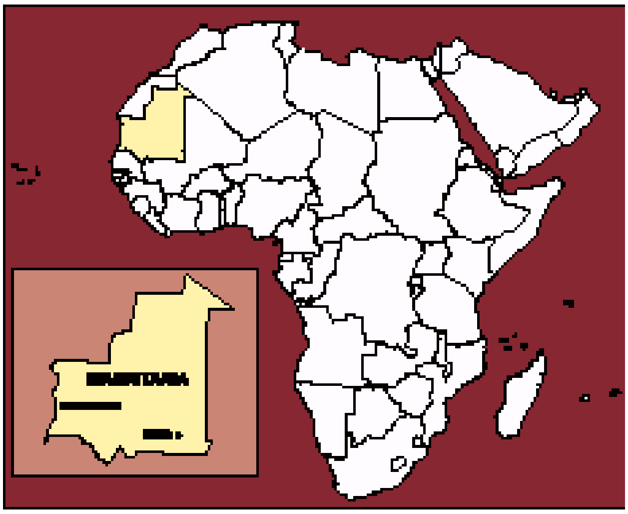
Mauritania: Debt Relief Will Facilitate Implementation of the Ambitious Ten-Year Program for Education

On February 10, 2000, Mauritania became eligible for relief of approximately 40% of its external debt under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. This should allow the country to devote more resources to its poverty reduction and economic and social development programs. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) sets out objectives, strategies, and policies to be implemented.



On 31 December 1998, the external debt of Mauritania was evaluated, in nominal terms, at US$2.3 billion, or 202% of the value of GDP. At that date, annual service on foreign debt amounted to US$132 million, of which central government debt accounted for US$81.7 million, nearly 40% of total government expenditures. Under the enhanced HIPC Initiative, Mauritania's debt is to be reduced by US$1.1 billion, the equivalent of 40% of the country's outstanding debt. This should cut the debt service due over the next ten years by some US$36 million annually, or about 80% percent of annual education spending.

The HIPC Initiative is of vital importance to Mauritania, since debt relief will ease the country's budget constraint and allow it to allocate substantially greater resources to the social sectors. These resources will make it possible to continue the reforms set out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)

Government adopted the main lines of the fifteen-year national poverty reduction strategy on 29 December 1999, after it had been validated during an "Awareness Raising Consultation on the National Poverty Reduction Strategy," held in early December. The institutional structure established immediately thereafter to prepare the PRSP comprised:

- *an Interministerial Committee for Poverty Reduction* (Comité interministériel de lutte contre la pauvreté

Mauritania - 1999

Population

• Population (in millions)	2.5
• Life expectancy	54
• Index of poverty (% of pop. under poverty line)	47%
• Illiteracy rate (% of pop. over 15 years)	58%
• Primary enrolment rate	86%

Debt indicators

• GNP (in US$ billions)	1.0
• GDP (in US$ billions)	0.96
• Debt, nominal value (in US$ billions)	2.2
• Debt, net actual value (NAV) (in US$ billions)	1.6
• Debt (NAV)/GDP	128%
• Debt (NAV)/Exports (1998)	289.5%
• Debt service/GDP (Proj. before debt relief) (1999-2002)	29.7%
• Debt service/GDP (Proj. after debt relief) (1999-2002)	23.9%

Expenditures-Social Sectors

• Total social sectors/GDP (1999)	7.4%
• Total social sectors/GDP (Proj. 1999-2002)	9.5%
• Basic education expenditures/GDP (1999)	4.9%
• Basic education expenditures/GDP (Proj. 1999-2003)	5.4%
• Health expenditures/GDP (1999)	1.7%
• Health expenditures/GDP (Proj. 1999-2003)	2.1%

Source: Mauritanian Government and World Bank estimates

Photo: UNESCO / Bernard Galy

– CILP), chaired by the prime minister and including the ministers principally concerned with the fight against poverty. This committee was responsible for oversight of the PRSP preparation and approval process;

- *a Technical Committee for Poverty Reduction* (Comité technique de lutte contre la pauvreté – CTLP), consisting of the chairs of the 12 working groups on various technical themes and a coordinating secretariat. The technical working groups included representatives of the central government, the private sector, civil society, and development partners. They were charged with formulating the sectoral contributions to the PRSP;
- *a Consultative Committee for Poverty Reduction* (Comité de concertation sur la lutte contre la pauvreté – CCLP), made up of representatives of the government and representatives of local elected officials, the private sector, and civil society. This committee was charged with monitoring the entire preparation process for the strategic poverty reduction documents;
- *a Donor Committee* comprising all of the country's development partners that are represented at Nouakchott.

Between June and November 2000, the first draft of the PRSP, which originated with the working groups on technical themes, underwent an enhancement and validation process that included several reviews by the various committees as well as national and regional workshops to discuss and validate the paper.

The final version of the PRSP was adopted at the National Conference, held January 23-25, 2001, with the active participation of all stakeholders in the country's development. With its ambitious objectives, this version places education at the core of Mauritania's development strategy. Indeed, education is expected to improve economic productivity, improve capacities to conceive and execute policies, trigger economic, financial and technological innovations, alleviate poverty and enhance individual skills.

The PRSP target is to raise the share of education spending from 3.7% of GDP in 1999 to 4.23% in 2004, 5% in 2010, and 5.4% in 2015. In 2002, the education sector budget will be double that of 2001, rising from about 2 billion to more than 5 billion Ouguiya.[1] The additional resources allocated for education will be used to implement an ambitious ten-year sectoral program, which is currently being finalized.

Priorities in education

The government's education strategy is aimed at providing every Mauritanian child with ten years of basic schooling (elementary plus the first secondary level), followed by training opportunities tailored to the requirements of the labor market. Under this strategy, the objectives for the sector are to: (i) increase the internal and external efficiency of the education system, (ii) enhance educational quality, and (iii) strengthen management, operational, and planning capabilities.

Particular attention will be given to pre-school education, with a view to ensuring the quality and coverage needed to prepare children for basic education.

Similarly, incentive mechanisms and efforts to foster greater private investment will encourage private education.

In elementary education, policy is aimed at: (i) achieving universal access by 2005, (ii) raising the retention rate (from 55% to 78% by 2010) by offering full academic cycles in all schools, (iii) gradually eliminating disparities among genders, areas, and regions, (iv) improving quality and relevance. The pupil/teacher ratio will be gradually reduced (from 48 currently to 40 in 2010) and the promotion rate raised (to 95% by 2010).

The quality of education will be improved by: (i) reforming the initial training courses of teachers and inspectors, (ii) introducing continuous education courses for teachers and inspectors, and (iii) providing every pupil and teacher with textbooks and teaching guides in the basic subjects (Arabic, French, mathematics).

Goals for secondary education include the following: (i) broaden access to the first four years of secondary school, (ii) upgrade science and foreign language courses, (iii) improve conditions for studying (libraries, computer labs, laboratories etc.), and (iv) gradually eliminate disparities among genders, areas, and regions.

Higher education objectives are geared to containing costs while enhancing both quality and relevance in order to ensure a better match between the education provided and the country's socio-economic development needs, notably through the expansion of scientific and technical education.

Another long-term objective is to eradicate illiteracy. In the medium term, the goal is to bring the illiteracy rate down to 20% by 2004. To that end, the four pillars of the literacy strategy will be to: (i) strengthen the financial and logistical resource base, (ii) boost the skills of literacy training staff and those responsible for designing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating literacy programs, (iii) improve programs and curricula, and (iv) achieve greater participation of the *mahadra* (traditional Koranic schools) in the literacy campaign through extension, training, and logistical support. In addition, this strategy will aim to foster more extensive involvement of civil society organizations in the design, execution, and monitoring of literacy programs.

Conclusion

Mauritania plans to use the additional resources allocated to the education sector as the basis for harmonious development of its education sector. The aim of the ten year plan is to be able to influence the whole system by putting into effect reforms that have a wide range of objectives: restructure the central administrative system; carry out regular system evaluations; reorganize the university and continuing education structures; improve human resources management; renovate pedagogical tools and programs; establish a hiring strategy; set up a school plan which equalizes existing regional disparities; raise the enrolment rates for girls; encourage the private sector to play a greater role, and increase the supply of high quality education for all.

This program can live up to its ambitions and hopes of a large number of people only if it is carried out effectively and supported over a long period of time. This will require greater debt relief and the development of similar programs in other sectors.

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1.The Ouguiya is the currency of Mauritania. One US$ is worth approximately 205 Ouguiyas. One French Franc is worth around 24 Ouguiyas.

A New President for ADEA

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa has a new president. This decision was made by the Steering Committee of ADEA, which met in Antananarivo May 2-4, 2001.

The new president, Mr. Ahlin Byll-Cataria, is program officer at the education division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland. A native of Togo, Mr. Byll-Cataria has worked for the DDC for 22 years, including 10 years in Niger as a trainer in adult education, and as deputy representative of the DDC. Mr. Byll Cataria has been member of the ADEA Steering Committee since March 1994. He is also the leader of the ADEA Working Group on Nonformal Education, which was created in March 1996 as a platform to support nonformal education and its contribution to the goals of Education for All in Africa.

Mr. Byll-Cataria will replace Ms Sissel Volan, who became president of ADEA in 1997. Ms Volan has worked at the Norwegian Agency for Cooperation and Development (NORAD) for the last 15 years. She is presently the coordinator of a technical group on research in education and culture. An active member of ADEA since its creation in 1988, Ms Volan will continue to be closely involved in the activities of the Association.

Education Statistics

Children Out of School and Population Censuses

Analysis of School Attendance Through Census Data

ADEA's Working Group on Education Statistics (WGES) is working on a project that uses education statistics from different sources to count children who are out of school and to statistically compare the characteristics of children in school with those out of school. This project is carried out jointly by WGES, UNICEF, and a few pilot countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are four main sources for education statistics:

- The annual school census (sometimes supplemented with school surveys on specific items)
- Household surveys
- Population censuses
- Administrative registers.

These four channels of education statistics should be regarded as different parts of the data collecting system, which complement each other.

The objective of this article is to highlight the untapped potential of population censuses for education statistics and to suggest how questions on education should be asked and how the data provided can be used. In particular, we want to encourage countries whose population census includes a question on school attendance to use this information to enrich the analysis of primary school attendance in their countries.

Education in the population census

The UN recommendations for the 2000 round of censuses of population and housing include five education items:

- Educational attainment
- Educational qualifications
- Field of education
- School attendance
- Literacy skills.

The most important item is educational attainment. Almost all countries include a question on educational attainment in their population censuses. The second most important item, we believe, is school attendance. Literacy is, of course, a vital issue but may be better measured in sample surveys than in the population census.

For purposes of international comparisons, countries should compile their data in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education, 1997 (ISCED 97). Countries coding "educational attainment" or "fields of education" according to a national standard classification can establish correspondence with ISCED either through double-coding or through mapping from detailed groups of the national classification to ISCED.

School attendance in the population census

In population censuses, school attendance is defined as *attendance at any accredited educational institution or program, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education.* The term "education" is understood to comprise all deliberate, systematic, and organized communication designed to bring about learning. Instruction that is not part of the recognized educational structure of the country, such as in-service training or staff training in factories, is not considered "school attendance" for census purposes. Data on school attendance refer to that at the actual time of the census; if the census is taken during the school vacation period, school attendance during the period just before the vacation is taken into account.

The concept of *school attendance* in the census is different from but complementary to the concept of *enrolment* used in statistics collected by ministries of education. A person may be enrolled but not attending school; and a person attending a training program may not be formally enrolled in an educational institution. A child may be enrolled, but for any one of a number of reasons not attending, for example because he or she helps with the family farm or business. Sometimes schools want to boost enrolment numbers to trigger more funds. The opposite is also possible; a child may be attending school but not be enrolled, due to incomplete school records, for example.

In the census, information on school attendance should be collected for persons of all ages included in the school system, generally 5 to 29 years of age. In countries where data are to cover attendance in pre-primary education and/or adult education, the age range should be adjusted appropriately. Also, it cannot be assumed that all those attending school are unemployed. The census should include separate items on employment and on school attendance.

Use of population census data on school attendance

The strength of population census data is that they include both children attending school and children not attending school. That means we can compare children in and out of school with other variables included in the census questionnaire, including the following:

- Age (single years of age)
- Gender
- Region (farm or non-farm residence; urban or rural areas)
- Citizenship/country or place of birth/ethnic group/language/religion
- Number of children in the household or household size
- Educational attainment of the head of household
- Main activity of the head of household

- Parents' occupation, industry branch/ sector and status in employment
- Mother's age
- Household income
- Housing conditions.

In many countries the data tables on school attendance that have been generated from the population censuses are scarce. Much more could be done. We recommended that, in the year 2000 round of population censuses, African countries analyze and compare children in and out of primary school by the relevant population census items, especially those that distinguish the characteristics of the target groups.

For policy target setting, governments need to identify geographic areas where primary school attendance is particularly poor. With this kind of census information, it would be possible to survey these areas and systematically investigate and document causes for non-attendance. Also population sub-groups with low primary school attendance could be identified. Using population census data makes it possible to give results also for *small areas or small population sub-groups*.

The National Education Statistical Information System (NESIS) Program of the Working Group on Education Statistics encourages countries to look at primary school attendance data in connection with the 2000 round of population censuses. The program has constructed a set of dummy tables on school attendance from the population census as examples to inspire and help to carry out such analyses. These dummy tables and more information on how to use population census data for education statistics may be obtained from the author.

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Higher Education

New Books on HIV / AIDS and Donor Assistance to Higher Education

The ADEA Working Group on Higher Education (WGHE) participated in the General Conference of the Association of African Universities, which took place in Nairobi February 5-9, 2001, and held its Steering Committee meeting February 10.

New reports presented at AAU General Conference

Working Group contributions to the AAU Conference included: (i) presentation of its study of HIV/AIDS and universities in Africa, entitled *Challenging the Challenger: Understanding and Expanding the Response of Universities in Africa to HIV/AIDS* by Prof. Michael Kelly of the University of Zamiba; (ii) a report and recommendations ensuing from the WGHE sponsored workshop on "Evaluating On-Line Resources for Teaching and Learning in African Universities"; and, (iii) distribution of the *Directory to Donor Assistance for African Higher Education* (in French and English) produced by the Working Group. WGHE financed the participation and travel to Nairobi of several governmental higher education policymakers.

The study on HIV/AIDS, *Challenging the Challenger: Understanding and Expanding the Response of Universities in Africa to HIV/AIDS* is an investigation of how AIDS is affecting African universities and how they are coping with the disease. The report draws upon case study reports commissioned by the WGHE at seven universities in six countries (Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia). The *Directory to Donor Assistance for African Higher Education* contains information on the range of donor priorities and possibilities for assistance in the field of higher education. The report, which covers 32 agencies, provides information such as types of assistance, channels of provision, and thematic assistance priorities. Contact details are provided for each agency. Both reports can be downloaded from the ADEA Web Site (www.ADEAnet.org)

Steering Committee reviews work program

The Steering Committee reviewed progress made under its work program and initiated planning for the coming year. Currently its main activity is a regional survey of innovations in African higher education conducted by four senior African researchers. Future planning focuses on: (i) support for efforts to expand the response of African universities to HIV/AIDS; (ii) development of tools facilitating the use of information technology in tertiary level instruction; and (iii) an initial assessment of institutional performance by non-university tertiary institutions. The Working Group will hold its next Steering Committee meeting in October 2001 in conjunction with the ADEA Biennial Meeting in Arusha, Tanzania.

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The Sahel Countries Mobilize for Education

Conference of the heads of state of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Chad (Bamako, Mali, November 26, 2000)

The summit meeting of the heads of state of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Chad, held in Bamako, Mali, on November 26, 2000, focused on the follow-up to the joint commitments made at the Dakar Forum in April 2000. The World Bank and UNESCO organized the conference as part of the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa, with support from the Norwegian Fund for Education. Four heads of state, a prime minister, and ministers representing their heads of state took part in the summit; all six were accompanied by their countries' education and finance ministers. In addition to the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, and the World Bank's Director of Human Development for the Africa Region, Mr. Birger Frederiksen, representatives of a number of development agencies were present, notably UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, the French Department of Cooperation, CIDA, and USAID.

A new context and objectives commensurate with EFA targets

Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Senegal rank among the countries with the lowest enrolment rates in Africa. Gross enrolment rates in these countries range from 32% to 65%, with markedly lower rates for girls and for children in rural areas. Only 28% of the school-age population completes primary school, and this figure drops to 10% for girls in rural areas. By linear extrapolation of the current rates, universal basic education will be reached not in 2015 but in fifty years—an unacceptable prospect, given the economic, social, and human importance of Education for All. To honor the pledges made at Dakar, these countries will therefore have to make unprecedented efforts in the education sector. This "major national project" or "crusade" must engender and sustain an exceptional degree of social mobilization if it is to be crowned with success. The goals adopted by the conference connected with this challenge of increasing the pace of educational development were:

- making EFA the foremost priority on the agendas of heads of state and their governments;
- making education a national cause;
- fostering a sub-regional dynamic of successful reform;
- mobilizing external aid on the scale required to meet targets and fulfill commitments.

Broad-based participation in the preparation process

The African countries were in charge of both preparing for and running the conference. Well before the conference, the education ministers, in conjunction with the finance and planning ministers, set up national teams in each country to produce documents taking stock of the education situation and strategies with respect to EFA, the resources available and to be raised, and prospects for quality and equity. These working papers provided the basis for a preparatory meeting of experts, which was held before the conference. Each country was represented by an education advisor to the head of state, two education experts, and two experts from the ministries of finance and planning. Using a simplified simulation model, the national teams developed plans for attaining the goal of universal basic education in 2015, incorporating the domestic efforts needed to increase resources and use them more efficiently without compromising the quality of learning or the effectiveness of schools.

These plans led to three draft documents: a framework for action, a framework for partnership, and a political resolution. The day before the conference, a ministerial meeting open to members of Parliament, teachers' unions, parents' associations, and NGOs was held to examine these draft documents. In this way, civil society institutions were able to participate in the process and give their views on the issues, especially on the reforms they considered to be most important. When this broadly participatory process had been completed, the heads of state discussed in detail the documents submitted by the ministers, and adopted them.

Promising political results

The political significance of the decisions and commitments taken by the heads of state made the Bamako conference a success. Fully aware that educational development is "first and foremost a question of political will," the heads of state committed themselves, in their final resolution, to making Education for All a national priority. This was reflected through the formulation of a series of measures intended to:

- substantially increase the proportion of GDP devoted to education, with a target of 4% of GDP by 2015 (it is currently in the 2 to 3% range);
- allocate at least 50% of the education budget to developing basic education;
- undertake reforms aimed, in particular, at sharing responsibilities between central and local authorities within a decentralized management framework that gives more autonomy to schools (while stressing the central government's responsibility for financing);

- gradually introduce the use of national languages in school and promote their development.

To make education a national cause, the heads of state decided to develop communication policies capable of mobilizing various sectors of the population around these objectives and reforms, while continuing those education policies on which a national consensus has already been reached. After calling for the promotion of new national and international partnerships, they set up a sub-regional mechanism to follow through on their decisions and charged the President of the Republic of Mali with ensuring that the mechanism functions smoothly.

Specific actions to achieve EFA in 2015

The frameworks for action and for partnership that accompany the political resolution highlight the actions to be taken by both the countries concerned and development agencies. In addition to the promised budget hikes, which should substantially increase national funding for education, governments intend to make more efficient use of these resources. The countries will strive to:

- reduce rates of repetition, which currently range from 15 to 30%, to a maximum of 10% of the children in school;
- raise rates of pupil retention through the end of the cycle to 80%;
- adjust wage expenditures to each country's capacity, aiming for an average wage cost of approximately four times the country's per capita GDP;
- combine control of the total wage bill with measures to generate income from school premises and staff so as to devote a portion of investment to improving quality and facilitating access to schooling for poor families. Furthermore, they should reinforce the capacity to manage and monitor education programs by introducing performance-based management, greater accountability of field personnel, rational criteria for allotting resources and staff to schools, quality standards for schools and pupils, systematic assessment of learning results, and institutional measures to deal with observed malfunctions.

> The Bamako conference set an example of the political dialogue that should be conducted within and between countries and development institutions in order to meet the joint commitments of the Dakar Forum, and to quicken the pace of educational development.

A new partnership agreement in support of EFA

"If the countries adhere to their commitments and have credible Education for All action plans, the financial resources needed will not be lacking." On the basis of this pledge made by development agencies at the Dakar Forum, the six countries clearly showed their awareness of the domestic efforts required and laid down seven criteria for a credible plan suited to the context:

- strong political motivation, as shown by substantial budgetary adjudications in favor of education;
- creation of a national consensus around the plan;
- a guarantee of sustainable financing;
- management and auditing mechanisms ensuring precision, efficiency, and transparency in the use of resources;
- institutional decentralization reforms to get local communities involved in management;
- evaluation and monitoring mechanisms at all levels;
- relevant strategies to improve quality and equity.

In return, the six countries asked the development agencies to enter into a partnership agreement meeting their external aid requirements, estimated at US$40-50 million annually per country through 2015. The agreement stresses that new partnerships must encourage integration of external initiatives within the framework of national education policies and poverty reduction strategies. They must also support African leadership and the harmonization of procedures with those in force at the local level, as well as with jointly agreed auditing and assessment procedures.

This brief report cannot do justice to the richness of the dialogue that characterized this major summit meeting. Education was called on to help meet the challenges facing the countries, such as the fight against AIDS, the promotion of a climate of tolerance and peace, and civil society participation. The Bamako conference set an example of the political dialogue that should be conducted within and between countries and development institutions in order to meet the joint commitments of the Dakar Forum, an indispensable condition for attaining the EFA goals within the specified timeframe. It is therefore necessary to begin at once and to put forth a massive effort in order to quicken the pace of educational development. It was on this note that Mali's head of state closed the conference, appealing to development institutions to provide assistance on a scale commensurate with the countries' requirements, which greatly exceed the resources freed up by the HIPC initiative. He assured one and all that he would not fail to discharge his assigned mandate of scrupulously ensuring the monitoring and assessment of the commitments made at Bamako.

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African Education Systems: A Comparative Economic Analysis[1]

by Alain Mingat and Bruno Suchaut – De Boeck Université Edition 2000

Alain Mingat and Bruno Suchaut's work is a seminal analysis of education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. The authors examine 29 African countries with populations of over 2 million and per capita GDP less than US$2,000, comparing their education systems to those of non-African countries that have similar levels of GDP.[2]

What makes this study original is its three-fold perspective on the subject matter. First, it adopts an *analytical perspective* based on rigorously compiled factual data. Second, it takes *an economic approach*, studying "the relationship between the goals of the school system, which are numerous, and the means, which are scarce." This is particularly relevant to African countries, since the stronger the constraints on the resources potentially available to the school system, the more difficult—and the more urgent—it is to identify the compromises that must be made and the priorities to be set. The third noteworthy feature of this work lies in its *comparative perspective*, which not only allows cross-country comparisons but also helps to identify possible relationships between the diverse modes of school organization in different national contexts and the results obtained in terms of quantity, quality, efficiency, and equity.

The book comprises seven chapters, which address the following topics:

- The quantitative development of school systems and the resources mobilized;
- The unit costs of schooling;
- The factors of school system organization and school quality;
- School careers and the issues of access, retention, repetition and transition between cycles;
- Effectiveness of schooling and the relations between the educational and productive spheres;
- Equity in education systems;
- Administrative and pedagogical management of school systems.

The study's main findings concerning the coverage of education systems, the quality of schools, and the efficiency of school systems are summarized below.

School system coverage

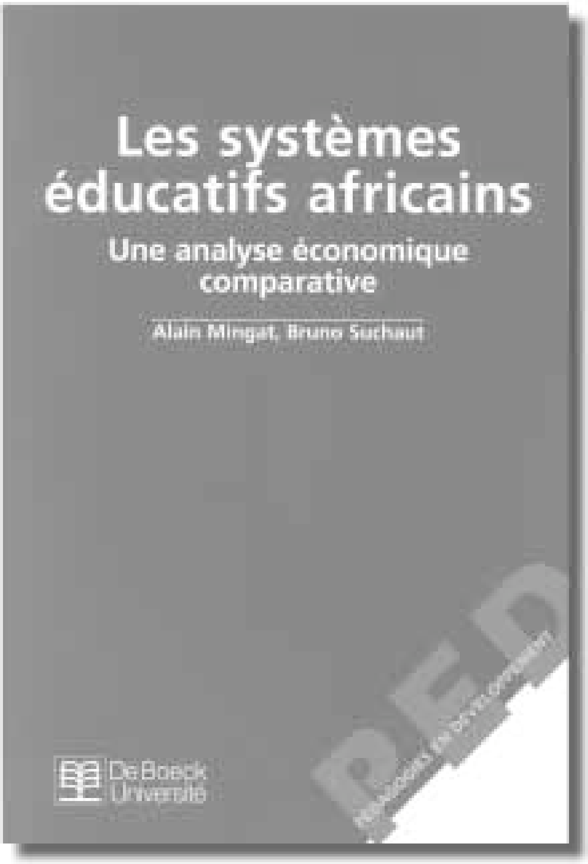
Where the quantity of education and the coverage of school systems are concerned, the study finds that:

- The French-speaking countries of West Africa, particularly the Sahel countries, are lagging behind in school enrolments.
- The amount of public funding allocated to education in Africa is roughly the same as in Asian and Latin American countries.
- There is little connection between the overall volume of resources made available to an education system and the coverage of this system. The efficiency with which resources are used matters more than the amount actually appropriated. In 1993, the French-speaking countries provided 1.3 years, on average, of schooling for each percentage point of GDP allocated to the education sector; the English-speaking African countries provided 2.1 years, on average; and the less developed countries in Asia and the Americas, 3.1 years.
- In the French-speaking countries (particularly the Sahel countries), the unit costs of education are high at all education levels. (See Chart on p.19) Compared to the Asian and Latin American countries, unit costs at the primary level are on average, 25% higher, in the English-speaking African countries, 75% higher in the French-speaking countries and 138% higher in the Sahel countries.
- The high unit costs in the French-speaking countries are mainly due to the level of teachers' wages, which are high both in relative terms (as a ratio of the country's per capita GDP) and in comparative terms (with other countries). High wage scales for teachers are by far the most important reason for the low schooling rates in these countries.

Quality

Where school quality is concerned, the study highlights the following:

- The performance of pupils is strongly tied to the country's level of socio-economic development.



- In contrast, there is little connection between the level of unit costs and pupils' average level of learning.
- Educational quality does not require hiring teachers who have a level of general education much higher than the first secondary cycle certificate. Since their level of educational attainment determines teachers' salaries, this finding obviously has important implications for school unit costs.
- In-service training develops teaching skills more effectively than does initial training.
- The nature of school buildings has no significant impact on the quality of schools.
- School feeding programs have a positive effect on learning.

Efficiency and equity

The study reveals that the French-speaking countries, particularly in the Sahel, generally make inefficient use of public appropriations for the school sector. It notes that:

- Repetition rates are high (over 20%, on average) in French-speaking Africa. This implies that 40% of public funding for education is "wasted" in the French-speaking countries (as against 25% in the English-speaking countries).
- For reasons of economic and social efficiency as well as equity, countries at a level of development comparable to that of the sub-Saharan African countries should give priority to investment in primary education, aiming for the broadest possible coverage and passable quality.
- The countries with the highest unit costs also have the narrowest educational coverage and the most inequitable distribution of the public funds allocated to education; this is particularly true in the French-speaking Sahel countries. Similarly, the bias against girls is significantly greater in the French-speaking African countries (and, once again, in the Sahel countries) than in the English-speaking countries.

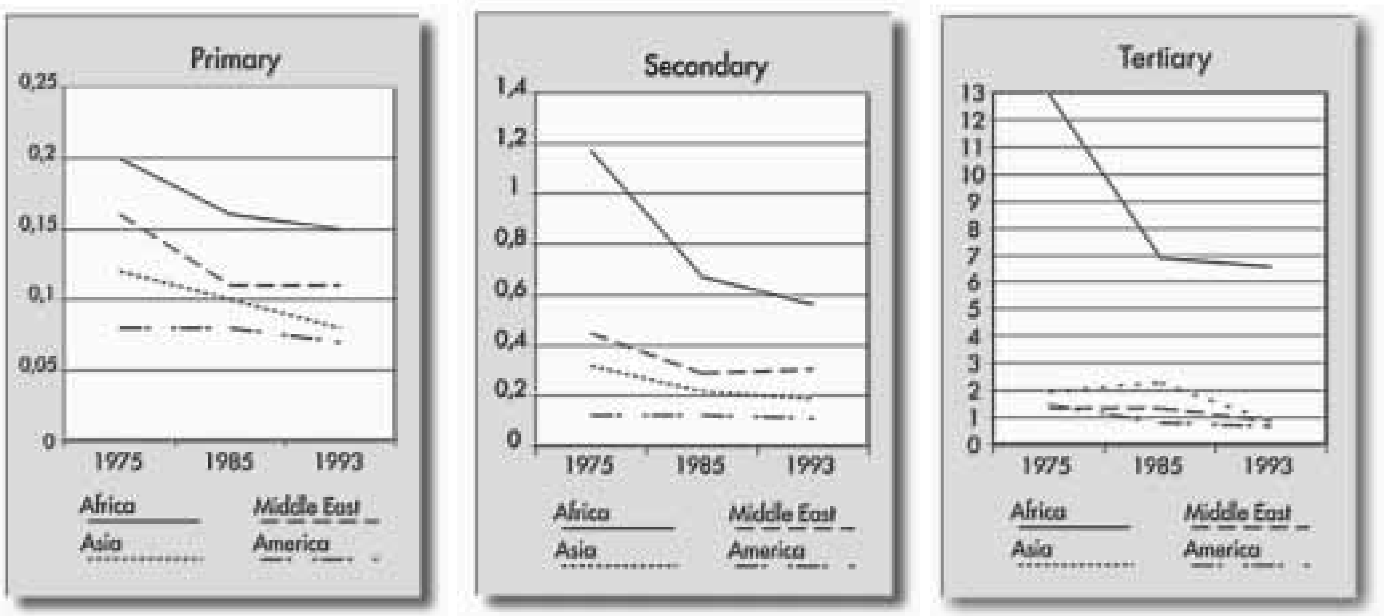
School system management

Since the greatest differences among schools have more to do with the way resources are shared out and used than with the actual amount of resources provided, the administrative and pedagogical management of school systems is important. The authors recommend that the role of school inspectorates be modified. It also suggests that school inspectors be trained to keep management charts of the schools in their districts in order to improve the management of resources and results.

The book concludes with recommendations for new perspectives in educational policy. Although this cross-country comparative approach has its limits (limited availability and quality of data, national averages that do not reflect sharp differences within a given country, etc.), a study of this kind is nonetheless highly original and useful. It brings a great deal of data and innovative analyses to bear on the educational policy decisions that are needed, while also examining the impact of budgetary constraints and the maneuvering room available to policy-makers. ❐

1. Exists in French only. Title in French: *Les systèmes éducatifs africains – Une analyse économique comparative.*
2. The main data cover 57 countries with over 2 million inhabitants (29 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and 28 non-African countries for which the Gross National Product (GNP) per person was less than US$2000 in 1993.

Unit costs by teaching levels and regions



Source: Mingat and Suchaut, «*Les systèmes éducatifs africains – Une analyse économique comparative*».

Calendar

ADEA Activities

June 20-22, 2001
COMED-IIEP-Working Group on Education Statistics (NESIS)
Workshop on statistics/training techniques for journalists and education specialists.
Dakar, Senegal.

June 26-27, 2001
Working Group on Education Sector Analysis (WGESA)
Steering Committee Meeting
Dakar, Senegal.

June 28, 2001
Working Group on Education Sector Analysis (WGESA)
Seminar on education sector analysis in Senegal and neighboring countries.
Dakar, Senegal.

July 9-12, 2001
Working Group on Books and Learning Materials (WGBLM)
Workshop on textbooks and the books sector.
Niamey, Niger.

July 24-25, 2001
ADEA
HIV/AIDS Workshop for Southern and Eastern African Countries.
Ezulwini Valley, Swaziland.

July 2001
Working Group on Education Statistics (WGES) / Working Group on Nonformal Education (WGNFE)
Joint NESIS/Nonformal Education Workshop.
Venue and dates to be confirmed.

August-September 2001
ADEA
National Working Group Symposiums
Uganda, Tanzania. Dates to be confirmed.

August 28-31, 2001
Working Group on the Teaching Profession, anglophone section (WGTP / as)
Annual Meeting of the Working Group.
Nairobi, Kenya.

October 7, 2001
Working Group on Higher Education (WGHE)
Steering Committee and General Meeting.
Arusha, Tanzania

October 8-11, 2001
ADEA
Biennial Meeting
Arusha, Tanzania

November 12-16, 2001
Working Group on Education Statistics (WGES).
NESIS Workshop – Validation of the Technical Module "Collection and Management of Statistical Data in Francophone West Africa."
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Other Activities

August 3-11, 2001
Zimbabwe International Book Fair
This book fair (ZIBF 2001) will focus on francophone African publishing. Country of focus: Senegal.
Harare, Zimbabwe.

15 October - 3 November 2001
UNESCO General Conference
31st session.
Paris, France.

Dates and venues may change. For more information please consult the ADEA Web Site (www.ADEAnet.org)

New..... Publications.......

- **What Works and What's New in Education: Africa Speaks!** Report from a Prospective, Stocktaking Review of Education in Africa. ADEA Secretariat.
- **Challenging the Challenger. Understanding and Expanding the Response of Universities in Africa to HIV/AIDS.** ADEA Working Group on Higher Education.
- **Directory to Donor Assistance for African Higher Education.** ADEA Working Group on Higher Education.
- **Assessment of Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990-2000.** ADEA Working Group on Education Statistics.
- **Teacher Management and Support in Africa. Catalogue of Publications and Documents 1985-2000 (draft version).** ADEA Working Group on the Teaching Profession, anglophone section.
- **Upgrading Book Distribution in Africa.** ADEA Working Group on Books and Learning Materials.
- **Non-Formal Education and Quality Basic Education for All.** ADEA Working Group on Nonformal Education.
- **The Dynamics of Nonformal Education.** ADEA Working Group on Nonformal Education.

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