



## The Africa Commission

*Commission on Effective Development Cooperation with Africa*

### Conference on the Educational Challenge in Ouagadougou 16 June 2008

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#### **I. FORMAT**

The aim of the conference is to ensure African ownership of the process and to facilitate a solid and concrete input for the Africa Commission's work and recommendations. The one-day conference is divided between plenary sessions and smaller working groups. Initially, the hosting Commissioners will open the conference. Ms. Odile Bonkougou, Minister for Basic Education and Literacy, Burkina Faso, will make the key note speech.

Participants will subsequently constitute a number of working groups, which will discuss questions within six sub-themes. The result of the working groups' discussions should be concrete and tangible recommendations, which will be presented in plenary at the end of the conference.

The recommendation should, where possible, be sub-divided into: 1) thematic areas and 2) specific target groups such as donors, donor recipients, international organisations, regional organisations, NGOs and other civil society organisations.

The outcome of the conference, including the recommendations from the working groups, will be compiled into a conference paper, which will feed into the Commission's further deliberations.

#### **II. THEMES FOR THE WORKING GROUPS**

The following themes will act as inspiration and guide the discussions of the working groups:

##### **1. A comprehensive approach to the educational sector:**

Development co-operation in education is at present focusing on primary education and there is a huge gap between enrolment/completion in basic education and enrolment in post primary education and higher education.

- What would be a reasonable balance in terms of enrolment and costs between the three levels of education (primary, secondary, and higher) in African countries with severe resource constraints?
- How should this balance be determined? Which criteria should be factored in when assessing this balance (link between the needs of the economy and education, public and private

financing, migration etc.)? How should a better balance be achieved? What strategy and which processes involving stakeholders? What are the main constraints to move ahead?

- How can development cooperation be more effective – what changes in the aid architecture are necessary? How can support become more aligned to national policies and systems of management and national accountability?

## **2. Primary education**

After decades of effort and billions of expenditure spend, universal primary education is still unachieved.

- What are the main constraints?
- What can be done about these constraints? How – beyond initial enrolments – can families be persuaded to keep their children in school? How can the quality of schooling be increased? Is it necessary to raise teachers' salaries significantly across the board and offer income supplements to poor families, as the Mexicans and Brazilians do, to lessen the short-term private costs to keeping children in school? If such novel methods were used, given poor governance in most countries, how would these transfers be administered credibly?
- How can development cooperation be more effective?

## **3. Secondary education, including technical and vocational education and training - skills development**

Demand for secondary education is growing as a consequence of the expansion of basic education. Competitiveness depends on knowledge, skills and competencies associated with analysis, language and communication skills, and the application of science and technology. These skills are acquired through secondary schooling. Technical and vocational education and training is necessary to provide skills and opportunities for young people for better employment. The supply of secondary schooling is not in line with demand.

- What are the constraints for expanding secondary education? How should secondary education be promoted? Which strategies for expansion? Which curricula? How to ensure an increasing number of high quality teachers and other key factors for quality in education? How to ensure sustainable financing? What is the role of the private sector (for profit and not-for profit)? How to ensure gender equality and equity?
- What are the constraints for more vocational/technical education? How can they be addressed in primary and post primary education, what are the issues? How to factor in demand and financing from the private sector, including agriculture; informal and formal economy; gender equality; sustainable financing etc?
- How can development co-operation be more effective in supporting expansion of post primary education, including technical and vocational education and training?

## **4. Higher education and research.**

It has been generally acknowledged that the private returns to education increase with the level of education, while the social returns diminish. However, the public benefits of higher education could have been underestimated, calling for more targeted investments. Recent research suggests that national governments and international donors should invest more in African higher education and research because of the potential role this could play for economic growth and poverty reduction.

- What are the constraints for expanding higher education and research? How should higher education and research be promoted in a way that is effective in supporting economic growth, employment and poverty reduction? Which strategies for expansion with a view to sustainable financing, quality, gender equality and equity? Should there be focus on particular areas – and based on what criteria?
- What is the role of private sector and public sector (financing, curricula, collaboration in research/innovation etc.)? Is there a role for more regional cooperation at tertiary level – and how? How should we deal with potential risks and benefits of migration (brain drain, circulation)?
- How can development co-operation be more effective in supporting higher education?

### **5. Equal access to education, including gender equality**

77 million children are out of school, mostly for reasons of poverty. 57 per cent of these are girls. Two thirds of the world's illiterates are women. The gender gap is narrowing in many countries but is still significant, especially at post primary levels.

- What are the barriers for getting girls into school and keeping them there, and what lessons could be learnt from those countries which have been successful in closing the gender gap? How can development co-operation be more effective in eliminating the gender gap at all levels of education?
- What are the challenges in rural areas for providing access to education? How can they be addressed?
- What lessons could be learnt from those countries which have been successful in giving children a second chance in literacy and numeracy programmes?
- How can development co-operation be more effective in support second chance programmes?

### **6. Education in post conflict countries and countries in fragile situations**

Children and youth in post conflict countries and countries in fragile situations, including countries affected by climate change and natural disasters, have less access to education than other children and youth, and development assistance is often less compared to the situation in other countries. An estimated 39 million of the current out of school children and youth live in these countries

- What are some promising lessons for addressing the right to education in these countries? The role of the state, local governments, the private sector, civil society?
- How can development co-operation become more effective in supporting children's and youth's right to education in these countries? Which funding mechanisms?

### **7. Policy Level Working Group**

The policy level is essential for creating the framework in which all of the above themes can be implemented in a satisfactory manner.

- What constraints exist on a policy level?
- How can governments do more to ensure access to and quality of the different levels of education and training?
- Should public-private partnerships be explored as a way forward?
- What would be a reasonable balance in terms of enrolment and costs between the three levels of education (primary, secondary, and higher) in African countries with severe resource constraints?

- Supply-demand: Is education a guarantee for employment? Is a more demand-driven approach to the education structure necessary? Is that a long-term answer or only a short-term solution?
- How can we secure a more efficient cooperation between international donors and African receiving countries in the educational sector? Is there a need to change international aid modalities?