

Press Release - December 2004

The Bamako conference on contractual teachers took place from 21 to 23 November 2004. It was jointly organized by ADEA, the World Bank, Education International and the Mali Ministry of Education, and brought together representatives of the Ministries of Education, Finance, Employment and the Civil Service, as well as leaders of teacher unions and PTAs in 12 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger Senegal, Chad and Togo. Also attending were representatives of various development agencies and groups from civil society: CIDA, AFD, AIF, ADB, ILO, CONFEMEN, French Cooperation, GTZ, IIEP, ERNWACA, SDC, UNICEF, UNESCO/IICBA, UQAM, ISSE/Guinea, and CRIFPE of the university of Laval.

The three days of discussion, informed by the data and findings of research, allowed participants to broaden and deepen their exchanges on the challenge of establishing the new category of contractual teachers.

It was noted that:

- The experiments are occurring in the context of transition in which it is hoped that improved resources will allow them to move beyond this stage;
- These new teachers, recruited by countries facing both limited resources and enormous enrolment needs, have helped them make substantial progress towards education for all;
- But the great disparities in salary between one category of teacher and the next, carry a great risk of staff turnover, disaffection and frustration;
- The training these teachers received, which raised many questions about their qualifications and quality of performance, warrants further attention.

For these reasons, and while giving due consideration to the diversity of national situations, the Conference highlighted certain recommendations concerning the recruitment, training, working conditions and future prospects of contractual teachers, to take account of the following:

- Ensuring that the level – BEPC or more – the recruitment conditions and selection through testing would guarantee that standards meet those of a primary school teacher;
- Ensuring that initial training of at least 6 months would be followed by a professional development plan that includes continuing education and various teaching supports targeting in-service needs;
- Offering an indeterminate contract that includes career planning, promotion opportunities, social protection, and the rights and obligations in accordance with the law;
- An effort to provide a fair salary that would provide a decent livelihood while still being compatible with the resources of the country and the obligation towards equity and thus education for all;

- To manage the simultaneous existence of different categories of teachers by standardizing recruitment, initial training and continuing education so as to gradually reduce the disparities while also anticipating special conditions arising from constrained growth;
- To structure and regulate the planned transition in keeping with improvements in internal and external resources so that there is a gradual convergence of salaries in the different categories – while also taking account of the enormous needs in recruitment and financial sustainability in a context of implementing a complete, universal primary education for all children;
- Promoting social recognition and appreciation of the teaching corps at national and international level.

More internal effort to mobilize resources will be needed to translate these recommendations into action; the resources must be used more effectively and be allocated to education and, especially, primary education. It is also necessary that commitments made by the international community should give rise to increased aid at the same level as the needs identified.

The participants were pleased with the quality of discussion, the consensual results and the commitment from everyone to work towards conditions allowing the fulfillment of quality education for all. They thanked the organizers as well as the Malian government for its generous hospitality. Finally, they enjoined the participants to extend and deepen the dialogue at the national level, and to involve all the stakeholders.