

Reaching Out, Reaching All

Sustaining Effective Policy and Practice for Education in Africa
and Promising Educational Responses to HIV/AIDS



Papers from the ADEA Biennial Meeting

(Arusha, Tanzania, October 7-11, 2001)



Association for the Development of Education in Africa

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ADF	African Development Forum
AERC	The African Economic Research Consortium
ANCEFA	African network to Campaign for EFA
APNET	African Publishers' Network
BEMP	Basic Education Master Plan
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEF	Community Education Fund
CEF	Community Educational Fund
CESAC	Centres for listening, treatment, help and advice
COBET	Complementary Basic Education and Training
COMED	Communication for Education and Development
DAE	Donors for African Education
DBSPE	District Based Support to Primary Education
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DR	Dropout Rate
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EMMA	Educational Mass Media Agency
ERNWACA	Education Research Network for West and Central Africa
ESC	Education Sector Conference
ESCE	Exam Scores at the end of primary school
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
ESR	Education for Self-Reliance
ETP	Education and Training Policy
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationists
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
GPPN	Global Public Policy Network
HAC	HIV/AIDS Conference
HIPC	Highly-Indebted Poor Countries
HOS	Heads of State Conference
HRD	Human Resources Development
IA	Adult Illiteracy
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDEN	District Inspectorate for Primary Education
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MFMC	My Future is My Choice
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture

NAWSE	Network of African Women Scientists and Engineers
NEC	National Executive Committee
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NESIS	National Education Statistical Information Systems
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIR	Net Intake Rate
NPAs	National Publishers' Associations
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PANA	Pan African News Agency
PCR	Population per classroom
PLWA	People living with AIDS
PSLE	Primary School Learning Examination
PTA	Parents/Teachers Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
REC	Regional Education Conference
RR	Repetition Rate
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SDP	Sector Development Program
SHAPE	Schools HIV/AIDS and Population Education
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STDS	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
SWLF	Swedish Working Life Fund
TAR	Proportion of Grade A Teachers in district
TRC	Teachers' Resources Center
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS Program
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WG	Working Group
WGTP	Working Group on Teaching Profession
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Scaling Up and Sustaining Promising Experiences in Africa: Lessons From Here and Elsewhere

by Mamadou NDOYE, ADEA Executive Secretary

From one Biennial Meeting to the next, the themes addressed may seem to bear no great resemblance to one another. From education programs and projects (1993)¹ to the formulation of education policy (1995)², partnerships (1997)³ and successful experiences (1999)⁴, and on to taking reform to scale (2001)⁵, the successive themes offer a great variety of centers of interest. All of these meetings have both stimulated and served as occasions for collegial discussions, productive interaction and sharing of experiences, encouraging the main stakeholders in education policy in Africa – ministers and education specialists along with their internal and external partners – to build common understandings that are conducive to new partnerships, to promote fresh political views favorable to reform, and to increase our theoretical and practical knowledge concerning crucial issues for educational development in Africa. The Biennial Meetings are thus important occasions, and for two distinct reasons. First, the choice of themes reflects the current priorities and/or anticipates future priorities of the agenda for educational cooperation in Africa, since this choice is made jointly by the main protagonists, particularly African education ministers, in view of the challenges they face. Second, the Biennale rounds out a learning process: it is preceded and prepared by a large-scale analytical exercise involving both African countries and education experts, and represents the crucial stage in which participants pool their experiences and the lessons learned. As a result, it provides the occasion for

1 Improving the Implementation of Education Projects in Africa through Ownership – Proceedings of the DAE Task Force Meetings (Angers, France, 22-24 October 1993). DAE (Donors to African Education), 1994.

2 Formulating Educational Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa – Proceedings of the DAE Biennial Meetings (Tours, 18-22 October 1995). DAE (Donors to African Education), 1996.

3 Partnerships for Capacity Building and Quality Improvements in Education – Proceedings of the ADEA Biennial Meeting (Dakar, Senegal, 14-18 October 1997). ADEA Secretariat, 1998.

4 What Works and What's New in Education: Africa Speaks! – Proceedings of the ADEA Biennial Meeting (Johannesburg, South Africa, 5-9 December 1999). ADEA Secretariat, 2000.

5 Reaching Out, Reaching All: Sustaining Effective Policy and Practice for Education in Africa, Fighting HIV/AIDS – Proceedings of the ADEA Biennial Meeting (Arusha, Tanzania, October 7-11, 2001). ADEA Secretariat, 2003.

comparisons, developments and syntheses that offer many insights on the ins and outs of the policies and practices found to be effective.

Can the Biennale, by thus highlighting the pre-eminence of substance and process in ADEA activities, also lead us to reflect a step further, to question their coherence, relevance and effectiveness?

How does the theme of the 2001 Biennale, “taking reforms to scale”, represent the continuity, extension or development of an intellectual process that is supposed to be concerned with relevance and gradual accumulation of knowledge of what works in educational development in Africa?

What do this approach to learning and this dialogue contribute in terms of making the lessons learned useful to learners, and in terms of how they are used by learners, given that these lessons are tied to specific contexts outside of which their validity is limited, to say the least?

In this respect, how can the lessons learned from African contexts be put into the perspective of international experience, particularly that of other developing regions – in this case, South Asia and Latin America? In what way are these lessons from outside Africa relevant to African contexts?

From one set of issues to the next: the choice of theme for the 2001 Biennale

The coherence and continuity of the intellectual approach developed by ADEA through its successive Biennales may be either questioned, felt, revealed or constructed, depending on the point of view adopted. For those who see a mere series of unconnected themes, it is legitimate to question the significance and impact of such a fragmented or piecemeal approach. However, this viewpoint ignores the unifying effect of ADEA's mission, which is to promote processes of social transformation of education in Africa, and of the pervasive influence of this mission in the choice of our centers of interest and activities. In this respect, we may assert that the issues show convergence in terms of their orientation and the fact that they all contribute to the same essential goals.

Viewed in chronological sequence, the theme of the 2001 Biennale certainly addressed a major challenge facing educational development in Africa. The prospective, stock-taking review of education conducted in 1998⁶ revealed that, contrary to the prevailing “Afro-pessimist” view, Africa possessed many successful and/or promising experiences in the education sector, aimed at broadening access, increasing equity, and improving educational quality, relevance and administration. Assessment of these experiences also indicated,

⁶ Study carried out in 1998 in preparation for the ADEA Biennial Meeting.

however, that it was very rare for this success to spread beyond the limited confines of a pilot project and have a substantial impact on the education system as a whole. Moreover, the sustainability of these success stories was doubtful in a number of cases, owing to the lack of a stable institutional and financial framework. This two-pronged conclusion – which asserts on the one hand that the education sector has enormous potential for innovation, reform and success, and on the other that conditions and capacities are inadequate for scaling up experiments that prove successful in the pilot phase – led to the choice of a theme charged with development issues: “scaling up and sustaining effective policy and practice” in order to “reach out and reach all”⁷. At this point, it becomes apparent that the process of reform analysis undertaken through the Biennales is following a logic based on successive challenges, and that this logic applies to educational design and planning as well as the conduct of change in the education sector. The fact is that the development and successful trial of an innovation immediately raises new questions concerning the next stages: extension, going to scale, and making the reform sustainable.

Methodologically, the praxis approach inaugurated by the 1999 exercise was to be consolidated in 2001 through the identification, analysis and documentation of successful experiences of scaling up, in Africa, South Asia (Bangladesh and India)⁸ and Latin America (Guatemala and El Salvador)⁹. This process of learning from what is happening in actual practice, in order to see which factors and conditions are conducive to success, leads to changes of approach aimed at improving practice and making actions more effective. The process thus involves a summary assessment, critical thinking, knowledge production and a plan for change all at the same time, driven by the dialectical relationships action-research-action, practice-theory-practice, and/or reform-learning-reform. This spiral approach, which leads stakeholders in African education to gradually develop knowledge and practice in the light of the real conditions, resources, capacities and needs of their respective contexts, offers promise of profound, controlled and lasting change. The Biennales seek to contribute to this cumulative process by helping to establish a culture of evaluation and/or analysis within education ministries, by promoting self-examination among stakeholders and dialogue among peers and countries as tools for social and constructivist learning, capacity building and promotion of desired reforms. This “praxis” approach, which is also a process of knowledge production for purposes of action and reform, was used to address the theme of the 2001 Biennale, with the results indicated below.

7 Reaching Out, Reaching All: Sustaining Effective Policy and Practice for Education in Africa, Fighting HIV/AIDS – Proceedings of the ADEA Biennial Meeting (Arusha, Tanzania, October 7-11, 2001)

8 Sharing and Learning: Bangladesh – India, 2001. Produced and Directed by Ecolivet, Katrina J. STEPS FOR MANKIND Productions for the World Bank with support from the Norwegian Education Trust Fund.

9 Sharing and Learning: El Salvador – Guatemala, 2000. Produced and Directed by Ecolivet, Katrina J. STEPS FOR MANKIND Productions for the World Bank with support from the Norwegian Education Trust Fund.

Scaling up reform in Africa: Success factors and problems

When speaking about Africa – and other regions of the world – it should be pointed out that national and even local contexts differ from one another and that they are constantly changing over time. For this reason, the 2001 exercise, whose conclusions appear in this work, strongly, and rightly, emphasized the importance of taking these individual contexts into consideration in:

- analyzing education systems, particularly from a comparative standpoint;
- assessing the success or failure of reforms;
- evaluating the lessons learned from the reforms or the scaling up of experimental programs.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that many context-specific factors may explain why the scaling up of a reform succeeds or fails in a given context and do just the opposite in another. This makes extrapolation a questionable technique and indicates that the lessons learned from one experience cannot be transferred mechanically to other contexts. It also explains why a certain approach to the lessons learned may give rise to no more than banal, general statements of no operational value.

That said, the issue of scaling up displays several characteristics that are common to most of Africa. First, most of the projects in question are pilot projects, demonstration projects or experimental projects initiated neither by African governments nor by local communities. For this reason, they are rarely sustainable, as their existence often depends on external financing: when that financing stops, the project stops. Even fewer make it past this initial stage and go to scale. Analysis of the cases of documented success has identified the following main conditions and factors associated with success¹⁰:

- firm commitment to reform on the part of a charismatic leader of some prominence;
- strong local demand that is adequately met by the reform;
- adequate, sustainable funding, stemming from a favorable decision in the resource allocation process and a substantial “mini-policy” in favor of reform;
- a learning approach to project development, thanks to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and networks for dialogue and sharing of information.

At the other end of the scale, failures in scaling up may be due to:

- the fact that one of the main conditions listed above is not met;
- lack of capacity, particularly at the technical and institutional levels;
- unsuitable monitoring, organization and management;

¹⁰ "Scaling up by focusing down: creating space to expand education reform", in present document *Reaching Out, Reaching All – Sustaining Effective Policy and Practice for Education in Africa and Promising Educational Responses to HIV/AIDS*. Joël Samoff, E. Molapi Sebatane and Martial Dembélé.

- the strength of corporatist, social, political and cultural resistance or opposition;
- an inappropriate strategy for scaling up.

Reflection on these conditions and factors is of capital importance for the success or failure of the extension and scaling-up of pilot projects. The reason is that the process of transition from the pilot stage to a larger scale is complex and difficult. The search for reproducibility faces many obstacles and often takes dead-end paths by focusing on reproducing the content or the sequence of steps of a successful innovation, as designed and implemented in its initial phase. Whereas what the exercise teaches us is that, in scaling up, the aim is less to reproduce the innovation as such than to tackle the challenge of re-creating the conditions and factors that made it work, often in a very different context.

Are these general lessons confirmed by experiences from Central America and Asia? And moreover, are they instructive for African stakeholders? How and in what way can these scaled-up reforms serve as models for those involved in educational development in Africa?

Latin America: Scaling up reforms introduced at the school and classroom levels

The reforms in question were undertaken in two Central American countries, Guatemala and El Salvador. The two countries' reform programs display some common features: both were undertaken in post-conflict situations, cover rural areas and are designed to improve access, equity and quality to the benefit of disadvantaged population groups. In the case of Guatemala, the New Unitary School (NEU) introduced a system-wide reform with a strong pedagogical component that synthesizes learner-centered innovations in an original way. In El Salvador, the Community-Managed Schools Program (EDUCO) is implementing a sweeping decentralization of the education system that gives communities full responsibility for managing their schools.

Analysis of the reform in Guatemala

Background

In 1996, Guatemala was emerging from a forty-year civil war. Disparities between rural and urban areas and between different population segments were strongly marked. Social services, including education, were inadequate and unequally distributed. Indigenous peoples in rural areas were particularly disadvantaged. Apart from Spanish, which serves as a lingua franca, some twenty languages are spoken by various communities, reflecting the fact that the country is a patchwork of different ethnic groups.

The reform

The educational reform called for in the 1996 peace agreement was implemented against this background. Six priorities were set: 1) universal literacy; 2) adaptation of the curriculum to the values, needs and realities of local cultures and languages, while at the same time making a place for the development of private provision and new technologies; 3) bilingual education; 4) decentralization; 5) a system for monitoring and evaluating learning; 6) enhancing the professionalism of the teaching force.

To initiate the reform, two programs with similar goals – the National Educational Development Program (PRONADE) and the New Unitary School (NEU) – were designed and implemented. The aim was to broaden access to schooling, improve learning outcomes and promote community participation, with the primary focus being on rural areas and on girls. The program examined here is the NEU.

The NEU: bringing educational reform to the school and classroom level

The NEU employs a new educational model encompassing not only school and classroom management, but also the organization of instruction and the teaching and learning process.

The NEU, first and foremost, takes the form of a primary school that combines several grades in multigrade classes, depending on the demographic situation and educational requirements in the rural environment concerned. The use of multigrade classes is not regarded as a constraint, but rather as a learning resource, as is indicated by the strategic pillars of the reform.

Self-learning by pupils

This is the first pillar of the reform. Pupils must build their knowledge base by themselves, through research, problem-solving, experimentation, practical exercises and application of the knowledge acquired in school to various situations. To this end, they have self-learning guides: textbooks designed by teachers especially for this purpose, on the basis of the country's official curriculum. These guides offer exercises covering the entire primary curriculum, divided into six successive levels, each of which is subdivided into 30 learning units. Each unit consists of several sequences which pupils must master one after the other through three types of exercises: those to be done on their own, those to be done with peers (group work and tutoring) and those to be done with the family.

A variety of learning materials suitable for self-learning by pupils

The first thing that strikes the visitor on entering an NEU classroom is the wealth and diversity of the learning materials, both for groups and for

individuals: posters, drawings, objects and animals. In addition to the self-learning guides, every classroom has “learning corners”, each focusing on a given field: mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences and so forth. Any pupil can withdraw to a learning corner to work on his or her own, observing, handling and experimenting with structured learning materials that in most cases are made locally. When pupils undertake to learn a specific topic under curricula allowing for pupils at different levels, they can find materials specifically designed for this purpose as well. Each class has its own library in addition to that of the school. And yet this rich learning environment does not come at high cost. Most of the learning aids are made in situ using local materials salvaged by teachers, pupils and parents.

Pupils learn at their own pace

Each pupil moves forward at his or her own pace. On completing a learning sequence with a positive evaluation from the teacher, the pupil goes on to the next. On completing all the sequences in a unit, pupils take a unit examination to assess what they have learned in order to move on to the next unit. This approach also applies to advancing from one grade to the next. The notions of the school year and of repeating a year thus take on a completely different meaning: owing to the flexible transitions allowed by this system, pupils can learn what is required for graduation to a higher grade in three months or in eighteen months, depending on their learning speed or availability. The latter is an issue because pupils may also interrupt their schooling to help parents with the coffee harvest or for other reasons, and can come back at any time, in order to resume the learning process where they had left off. The school year and the system governing transition between grades are thus remarkably flexible, allowing the pace of learning to be adapted to the local context and the needs of each pupil.

Schools and classrooms are managed by pupils

Each NEU school is managed by a school government, generally consisting of a president, vice-president and three secretaries, all of whom are pupils elected by their peers following an electoral campaign. The school government is assisted by specialized committees, whose members are also pupils. It is responsible for managing questions of hygiene, health, discipline and school meals, as well as organizing activities related to the non-classroom aspects of schools, such as running the library, daily cleaning and upkeep, reception of visitors, etc.

At the level of the individual class, the concern for having pupils take responsibility is also reflected in their management of the library, handling of cleaning chores, and tutoring, which encourages group work in multigrade classes.

All of this cultivates a spirit of participation, a sense of initiative and responsibility, socialization of pupils and learning about democracy and citizenship.

Teachers' professional development

First of all, the reform is not extended to a given school unless the teachers working there so request. After this selection based on commitment, teachers take part in awareness-raising workshops led by their peers who are already practitioners of the methods introduced by the reform. The workshop participants jointly engage in critical examination of results and approaches, as well as the results of traditional teaching methods, and subsequently in consideration of how to find new ways of improving learning outcomes.

This initiation into the reform paves the way for an extensive process of teacher support:

- (i) five training workshops are organized each year;
- (ii) quality circle meetings are held monthly to analyze performance, share experiences and work together to develop technologies, in particular for the production of learning materials;
- (iii) principals and inspectors are close to teachers, providing back-up and support, with frequent class visits.

All of these activities give priority to reinforcing teachers' self-examination practices, learning through experience about the innovations of the reform, and inter-training of peers.

Analysis of the reform in El Salvador

Background

El Salvador, like Guatemala, went through a civil war that lasted a dozen years before it finally ended in 1992. Poverty and social exclusion persisted in much of the country, particularly rural areas and working-class urban areas. More than half of children aged 4 to 6 did not attend pre-school and 15% of school-age children lacked access to primary education. Half of all adolescents were not in school. These access and equity problems were compounded by difficulties in terms of quality, as learning outcomes, particularly in mathematics, were poor and uneven. At best 60% of pupils passed the national exams at the end of primary school.

The 1991 reform

The reform began in 1991, one year after the Jomtien conference and a year before the end of the civil war. It was implemented through numerous programs, including the Community-Managed Schools Program (EDUCO), fast-track education for overage pupils and distance education for adults and teenagers.

Reform strategies targeted the following priorities: strengthening pre-school programs, promoting and increasing community participation, improving

quality, developing teacher training, using audiovisual methods, developing and rehabilitating infrastructure, revising curricula, and modernizing school administration. The EDUCO program is analyzed here.

EDUCO: a reform based on decentralizing school administration

The EDUCO program is grounded in the hypothesis that “to achieve effective and high-quality education, the parents of the children enrolled in schools need to be motivated and involved in running the schools”.

The reform has sought to accomplish this by decentralizing school administration and devolving power from the Ministry of Education to local communities. The powers transferred to the communities concern: 1) the selection, hiring and management of teachers; 2) administration of the funds to be used to pay teacher salaries and other school operating expenses; 3) adoption of the school budget; 4) management of the school meals program; 5) decisions on building new classrooms; and 6) informing and mobilizing families to support schooling. The reform has been implemented through several programs grouped under the 1995-2005 Ten-Year Plan.

The institutional framework

Local communities were empowered through community education associations (ACEs), by which are established and organized by communities. They are managed by a steering committee elected at an annual meeting open to all parents. The ACEs have been given official status by an executive decree that sets out “special ACE regulations” defining the conditions for their establishment and operation. To obtain support from the Ministry of Education, the ACE must comply with these conditions and must also sign a contract with the state that specifies the respective responsibilities of the two parties. In general, the Ministry of Education has responsibility for finances, monitoring the use of funds and school supervision. It is up to the ACEs to administer the funds allocated to schools and to handle spending and accounting.

Hiring and managing teachers

The powers transferred to communities are intended first of all to meet the challenge of retaining teachers in disadvantaged areas where they are usually not keen to work. As all candidates must have a teaching diploma, the selection criteria emphasized by the ACEs include acceptance of local conditions, a willingness to work in the area over a longer period of time and a commitment to children. Candidates are interviewed before the hiring decision is made.

ACEs also have responsibility for monitoring teachers and ensuring that they are actually at their posts. ACEs work with the school principal and

supervisor to evaluate teachers' work and decide whether their contracts should be renewed.

Management of funds and equipment

Each ACE has a bank account where it deposits checks sent by the Ministry of Education. The ACE uses these funds to pay teacher salaries and to cover the expenses of the meals program and school operating and maintenance expenses. It works with the teachers to set the school budget and, if necessary, raises additional funds to meet needs not covered by government funding.

ACEs are in charge of organizing school meals with the help of women volunteers from the community, improving the school grounds and occasionally providing labor to build new classrooms. They conduct activities to build awareness about the need for children to be enrolled in school, for regular school attendance and for the education of girls. They work with the "parents' schools" to mobilize community participation in promoting the values of peace, tolerance, environmental protection and other issues.

Lessons learned from the Latin American experience

In both El Salvador and Guatemala, the two main reforms have, despite their complexity, been scaled up successfully, in view of the contrast between their initial experimental stage and subsequent quantitative and geographical expansion.

Results of the NEU

In the first phase, the NEU was tried out in some 20 schools in two provinces. From 1996 to 2000, it spread to the country's other provinces and eventually covered 3,800 schools. The successful extension of the program has been accompanied by other positive outcomes revealed by the program evaluation:

- increase in school attendance in rural areas;
- improvement in indicators of pupils' and teachers' participation;
- better performance in language learning;
- a shift in teaching concepts and practices toward active methods;
- development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence;
- improved primary school completion rates, 7 to 15 percentage points higher than in traditional rural schools.

Results of EDUCO

In its initial phase in 1991, the EDUCO program was tried out in six schools. Over the next ten years, it was gradually extended to 1,709 schools. This successful example of going to scale also brought:

- active, informed involvement of parents and communities in school management;
- broader access and increased equity for the poorest children;
- increased participation by women in school affairs;
- more efficient schools in terms of lower drop-out and repetition rates;
- improved administrative and managerial capacity in the education system.

In the evaluations of these reforms, some of the conditions and factors identified as the causes of this success – such as commitment on the part of political leaders, local demand and adequate funding – are the same as those highlighted in African contexts, although they may work in different ways. The evaluations also strongly emphasize the importance of communication policy, the realism and gradual nature of the reform effort, the support provided to local stakeholders, arrangements for monitoring and support, and the flexibility of the decentralized model.

Commitment of the political leadership

The commitment of the country's top political leaders was not limited to solemn pronouncements and well-meaning petitions, but took the practical form of policy decisions, budgetary choices and follow-up actions aimed at ensuring the success of the reform. The government adopted and initiated the reforms under the terms of the peace agreement that followed a long period of civil war. The political will to broaden access to education and to guarantee equity and quality for the most disadvantaged areas and population segments was a decisive factor in this decision. Through legislation and executive orders, the government established an institutional framework favorable to the reform, and this helped to remove the administrative and legal obstacles blocking the devolution of public powers and resources to village communities. The government also undertook to modernize the administration of the education system and to mobilize the bureaucracy to provide substantial support to the reform. The budgeting process provided for higher unit costs in schools participating in the reform, and procedures for direct transfer of funds from the Ministry to schools were adopted to bolster spending efficiency. The government also implemented elaborate communication strategies in support of the launch and subsequent conduct of the reform and set up effective arrangements to support local stakeholders (communities, teachers, supervisors).

Local demand and support to local stakeholders

The strategy for extending the reform is demand-driven. In practice, this means that a school will participate in the reform only if the community and teachers jointly agree to this and so request. This voluntary entry into the reform effort is marked by the signature of an agreement defining the

roles and responsibilities of the various interested parties, and particularly between the Ministry of Education and the community education association (ACE) representing the community. Obviously, acceptance of the reform does not come without effort. The government's communication policy and the power of attraction of the pilot experience help to engender a positive perception of the reform among the population. The support provided to local stakeholders in terms of capacity building, tools and equipment were also particularly strong incentives. Measures to prepare communities for the reform include visits in the field, training and financial support packages that strengthen ACEs' capacities in a variety of areas: management of funds and equipment, running the meals program, democratic functioning of the ACEs, strategies for social mobilization, schools for parents. As for teachers, a variety of preparatory sessions lead them gradually to undertake, along with their peers in reformed schools, a thorough-going critical examination of traditional schools, and then to a process of resolving the problems encountered and learning about the innovative approaches introduced by the reform: self-learning, production of learning materials, school governments, etc. In addition, a system of close supervision provides them with advice and intensive support regarding teaching techniques.

Substantial funding and complementary partnerships

As mentioned above, the funding appropriation for reformed schools is based on a higher unit cost than that for other schools, and also takes into account the mechanisms and measures needed to implement the changes involved in the reform. Such positive discrimination in resource allocation was also a measure aimed at enhancing equity: in addition to teachers' salaries, the cost of textbooks, materials, construction, equipment, upkeep and operation, the state finances the meals program, the support given to ACEs, bringing supervision closer to schools, in-service teacher training, mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and research. Community participation is therefore primarily focused on administering the funds allocated by the state and on managing schools. Communities contribute volunteer labor, particularly for implementing meals programs, in which women belonging to the community cook and distribute meals to pupils on a volunteer basis. In some cases, communities provide the labor for the construction and upkeep of school buildings. In short, the bulk of their funding, and the stability of such funding, are provided by the central government.

The reform was not financed solely from domestic sources, however, as the government received substantial financial assistance from external sources for its implementation. In contrast to most cases in Africa, however, this reform was initiated and planned at the country level and integrated into national policy, and it is in this context that the domestic budget is supplemented by external funds.

Communication policy

When those responsible for the reform, particularly ministers, were asked which was the decisive factor in its success, the most frequent answer pointed to communication policy. The main purpose of the communication policy employed was to ensure that the goals and strategies of the reform were shared by all beneficiaries, stakeholders and partners. In this respect, the government became deeply involved in promoting the reform through systematic information and awareness-raising campaigns making use of mass media and various events devoted to communication on social affairs. In this social marketing effort, the government made use of not only its own voice, but those of the leaders of civil society organizations, religious congregations and traditional authorities – in short, all the opinion leaders enjoying credibility among the population – in order to ensure that the message was heard and earn broader support for the reform. The government was also able to create the forums needed for participatory communication (meetings, committees, surveys, workshops), fostering discussion, dialogue, consultation, cooperation and negotiation in order to build a consensus among the various sectors involved, win the support of communities, reach compromises with teachers' unions, get the private coffee-growing sector involved, and establish a variety of partnerships with civil society organizations. The strong involvement of communities and teachers in developing, preparing for and implementing the reform, as well as the networks established for vertical and horizontal exchange of ideas and information, stimulated the development of processes, attitudes and behavior favorable to change. Last but not least, the fact that the organizations and staff specifically devoted to the reform were integrated into the existing structure of the Ministry of Education stimulated internal communication and involved the entire educational administration in the process instead of relegating it to marginal status.

The realistic and gradual nature of the reform

The objectives set for reform must take account of the capacities and customs of those involved, as well as the real – and not simply desirable or assumed – conditions in which the reform is supposed to be implemented. Otherwise, the reform effort will inevitably run into problems of feasibility. To ensure that the changes expected of the reform were sufficiently explicit, specific and reasonable, Guatemala's Ministry of Education gave teachers in active service the responsibility for developing textbooks designed for self-learning. This was the chief innovation of the pedagogical component of the reform. This level of involvement on the part of the key stakeholders in the reform was supposed to ensure that the changes sought would be closely linked to the capacities of teachers and their pupils and to actual classroom conditions. Experience elsewhere has shown that when such tasks are entrusted to experts far from the situation on the ground, teachers often find the proposed options unrealistic. Teachers have continued to play a central

role in the design of structured learning materials, peer training and peer supervision. This facilitated implementation of the reform by enhancing its credibility in the eyes of teachers.

Where communities are concerned, the decentralization process was based on a study that analyzed their experience of participation. This ensured that the reform would be based on the procedures and approaches most familiar to them. In other words, the reform took what they were already doing and what they knew how to do as the starting point for an evolving strategy of community participation.

The strategy of gradualism required that communication concerning the reform be couched in a language familiar to stakeholders, that it not overload them with work and that changes be devised and implemented over the longer term rather than overnight. The NEU program grew from 20 schools in 1996 to 3,800 schools in 2000, and continues to expand from year to year into new provinces. EDUCO, which involved six schools in the initial phase, was gradually extended to 1,709 in 2001, with a similar pattern of geographic expansion. The various innovations included in the reform were introduced gradually, in accordance with schedule that defined the stages in the implementation of innovation and set the interim goals for each stage. At each stage, an assessment, capitalization of the lessons learned, and introduction of the needed adjustments allowed the reform to move forward and proceed by successive alterations.

This strategy based on moving gradually forward makes the options proposed more realistic and constitutes a factor in the success of the reform.

The monitoring and support system

Substantial technical and financial resources were employed to establish a system of monitoring, assessment and support. Frequent visits on the ground by community oversight bodies, regular surveys on the progress of the reform, close supervision of teaching practices, periodic reports from ACEs and schools, meetings between the various groups of stakeholders, quality circles composed of teachers from several schools and the information system established by the Ministry of Education are all linked together so as to collect and process relevant data. The results have been studied to identify the basic problems facing the reform and the strategies likely to resolve them. At both the national and local levels, the monitoring system is perceived not as a form of control but as a tool for providing support and advice to key actors in the reform.

The flexibility of the decentralized model

The model used for the reform leaves considerable room for initiative and adaptation to the needs and realities of the local context. The decision whether

to use the (native) local language as part of a strategy of bilingualism (native language-Spanish) is left up to the grassroots stakeholders, i.e. teachers and communities. More generally, the curriculum allows adaptation of learning materials, course content and some educational goals to the local context. Teaching and learning approaches and processes call on local know-how and on the participation of families and communities. The schedule of the school year can be adapted to the needs and constraints of families, according to whether children are free to attend school during a given period. Combinations of levels in multigrade classes are left up to the discretion of teachers and school principals. All of this, in addition to the support given to community skills and resources, enhances the independence, initiative, creativity and responsibility of community-level stakeholders in the school system, who no longer have any doubt that both the reform and the school system itself belong to them.

Problems, challenges and risks

The reforms undertaken in the two countries have of course run into obstacles and opposition.

Teachers' unions called on their members to oppose what they regarded as attempts to privatize the education system by means of community participation. Considerable effort had to be expended on dialogue and conciliation to overcome such opposition from interest groups.

There was also opposition from the bureaucracy, on the grounds that it was not possible to transfer public funding to grassroots communities having no legal status. The government was obliged to issue specific ordinances to overcome these obstacles.

Some financial procedures have been kept at levels too complex for ordinary citizens to manage, while the Ministry has not always had enough staff to oversee ACEs. As a result, there have been some delays in funds transfers to schools.

The isolation, poverty and illiteracy of the rural groups targeted also caused significant problems in the implementation of the reforms.

Taking targeted and local planning strategies to scale: Inclusion of the poor and girls in South Asia

The experiences of scaling up observed in Bangladesh and India generally took place in contexts of extreme poverty, with all its attendant ills: illiteracy, malnutrition, disease, discrimination. The countries also featured highly

unusual demographic features, in terms not only of population size and density, but also of social and cultural diversity and harmony.

In Bangladesh, the aim of the education and literacy program of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is to integrate the excluded, particularly the poorest groups, and, more specifically, girls in rural areas. With this in mind, the BRAC, an NGO, is implementing a targeted strategy to supplement the government's efforts to achieve education for all.

In India, the District Primary Education Project is a government initiative to expand access to education and improve quality, efficiency and equity. The strategy is based on vigorous mobilization of local potential in planning, administration, teacher development and the diversification of provision, as well as in strategies to empower girls and women.

Analysis of the BRAC experience

Background

Bangladesh has the highest population density in the world. Famine is an ever-present threat. Annual income per capita is estimated at \$250, and half of the population – 80% of which lives in rural areas – is below the poverty line. In 1971, many observers doubted that Bangladesh would be able to survive the aftermath of a bloody civil war, but the country has achieved substantial economic and social development since then. These advances have been uneven, however. Although primary education in Bangladesh is free and compulsory, over 13 million children either have never attended school or dropped out early on. Only one child in four completes primary schooling.

The reform

Since 1971, Bangladesh has established a legal framework aimed at promoting education for all.

The Integrated Non-Formal Education Program (INFEP) was set up by the government after the Jomtien conference. Its aim is to provide basic literacy training and continuing education. INFEP is designed to serve four age groups, from 8 to 45 years of age, and targets about 34 million learners.

Basic education thus consists of two complementary systems: the formal system and the non-formal system. In the latter, local authorities are encouraged to become involved in education through the establishment of school management committees and parent-teacher associations. Currently, NGOs look after 8% of children, to whom they deliver alternative models of basic education designed for the neediest, and most especially for children aged 8 to 15. The education program of the BRAC is part of this huge undertaking.

BRAC schools

BRAC was formed in 1972 as a reconstruction and rural development program to assist the poorest groups. Education and literacy training were not addressed until 1985, when women participating in development committees managed to convince the BRAC that no lasting progress could be made in rural development without serious investment in education.

Principles governing BRAC schools

The basic principles of the program include the following: targeting a specific group (the very poor, especially in rural areas); giving priority to girls who have never been to school or have dropped out; achieving very low unit costs (about US\$18 per pupil per year); and facilitating community participation. The BRAC program curriculum is a version of the national program curriculum, adapted and simplified to make it suitable for the target population. Most of the teachers are married women who are selected from among the local communities and have completed at least nine years of formal education. This practice helps to anchor teaching staff in the locality and develops role models for the education of girls.

BRAC maintains a close partnership with the government and manages some community schools under a contract with it. Under this kind of cooperation, BRAC is assigned the role of developing an educational network in areas that are hard for the state to reach.

Adapting schools to local conditions

Parents decide where to locate BRAC schools so that they will be as close as possible to where pupils live. Parents often help to build the school, and they hire and supervise the teacher. It is parents who set school hours and schedules so that children can continue to help them at home or in the fields. Pupils go to school twelve months a year, but only three hours a day. They learn to read, write and count, and they are taught life skills using examples drawn from the rural context. Traditional songs and dances are used to reinforce what is learned and as class management tools.

Since teachers belong to the same community as the pupils, they can connect what pupils are learning to village customs, social behavior and day-to-day experience. Classes are small, allowing the teacher to form individual relationships with the children. Of the 1.2 million learners enrolled in BRAC schools, 70% are girls.

Decentralized management of schools

School management is decentralized to take account of local conditions and to enable the local community to participate. School management committees are created in each learning center in order to let parents and

the community participate in the management and good governance of the school. As indicated below, parents and communities have considerable responsibility for managing schools.

A dense system of supervision

Parents have monthly meetings with the teacher. A most impressive system of supervision was established to provide support to teachers: it includes a weekly formative evaluation, aimed at providing assistance to local teaching and administrative staff, and a refresher training course each month.

The role of educational advisors is to provide sustained support to “facilitators” and to handle any problems that may arise locally. A culture of feedback and constant communication among supervisory and teaching staff is encouraged.

Low unit costs

Primary education in BRAC schools has a lower unit cost than the public system. The investments made in construction and school facilities are fairly modest, as are teachers’ salaries. Outside assessments show, however, that over half of the children in the BRAC program succeed in acquiring basic skills, while less than one-third of pupils in formal schools do so. BRAC schools are thus more cost-effective in terms of what is actually learned. BRAC owes its effectiveness to, among other things, the fact that its educational program can use some of the human resources and infrastructure that are already in place to run other components of its work program.

Educational quality

BRAC provides education of good quality in a context of rather limited resources and a difficult environment. The program’s “facilitators”, as well as the pupils and teachers in the state school system, recognize that BRAC pupils perform rather well compared to their peers in public schools. They seem to find it easy to join secondary-level classes in the formal school system and show results as good as those of their peers from other primary education programs.

Analysis of the reform in India

Background

India’s school system is diversified, complex and changing rapidly. Since 1947, India has succeeded in building one of the largest school systems in the world, with 179 million children aged 6 to 10 attending primary school. Despite the very considerable progress made in education, over 33 million

school-age children are still out of school. Forty per cent of the pupils enrolled in the first year do not finish the four or five years of primary schooling, and those who do obtain the primary school certificate do not acquire much academic knowledge.

The most disadvantaged children are from poor families: girls, children who work and children belonging to the castes of “untouchables”. Such disparities are now even greater, as the situation of the school system deteriorated in terms of access, quality and efficiency in the 1990s.

Sharing of responsibilities

India succeeded in building a national consensus that it should work toward achieving Universal Primary Education. It now has 888,000 primary schools, with over 150 million children from 6 to 14 years old enrolled and 2.9 million teachers employed in them.

Under India’s Constitution, education is one of the “shared” fields in which the federal government and the states have joint responsibility. The federal government is responsible for giving the education system a more national and integrated character, maintaining quality and standards, and monitoring and managing the international aspects of education. Implementation of educational programs, however, is the exclusive prerogative of the states. A multi-level structure has been established reflecting the various levels of the decentralized system (federal, states, districts, blocks, villages and schools). The devolution of powers to local bodies has helped to broaden access and increase equity.

The District Primary Education Project (DPEP)

The District Primary Education Project, approved in November 1994, encourages and supports the development of participatory processes in planning and management, awareness-raising about gender disparities, and teacher development through contributions to teacher training and decentralized management. The program covers 149 districts in 14 states, including the districts where the female literacy rate is below the national average.

The priority is still to expand the system by delivering education through both the formal and non-formal systems. To this end, planning at local level and any strategies conducive to the extension of the system and improvements in quality, the internal and external efficiency of primary education, and equity are encouraged.

Other activities conducted under the project aim to improve teaching strategies, increase community participation in education and build institutional and management capacity as regards support for educational provision.

Diversification and adaptation of programs

In India, the education system tries to address the problems arising from the diversity of situations and learning requirements of minorities, while applying the program intended for the majority on a very wide scale. To illustrate this policy, we may point to the interest shown in early childhood education and to schooling for children from minority groups. Early childhood care and education (ECCE), which already existed in some communities, have been incorporated into the DPEP, thus underscoring the importance given to preparing children for formal schooling. The ECCE program is also increasing access for older children who, under normal circumstances, would not be able to attend school because they would have to look after their younger brothers and sisters.

Another example is the interest shown in Islamic centers as a means of educating older children who have not previously been to school. To accomplish this, a curriculum has been selected that combines moral education, based on religion, and basic lay education, in order to allow some children to join the formal school system. In Islamic centers, the committee of the local madrasa either replaces or collaborates with the village education committee (VEC).

Teacher training

The teacher training system follows the same multi-level structure as the overall education system, providing training at the level of the state, the district, the urban block and individual schools. It connects teachers' initial and in-service training with local support structures, while promoting dialogue and learning among the various levels. The establishment of block resource centers (BRCs) has given teachers considerable support and contributes to their effectiveness. In addition to supervisory activities and training sessions, networks for peer dialogue and tutoring systems, notably for auxiliary teachers (known as "para-teachers"), are used to support teacher development. This variety of approaches is used to cover the great variety of situations and meet the demand for teacher training at local level, while stimulating the development of self-examination and continual efforts to improve teaching skills.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation have been enhanced to provide information on the progress of the program and to support learning on the part of stakeholders. These processes help to maintain the level and quality of education through: (i) ongoing research, whose findings are used to improve the system; (ii) involvement of civil society in education; (iii) reduction of the illiteracy and dropout rates; (iv) empowerment of girls and women through appropriate incentive measures. They also favor accountability and trans-

parency, particularly through the participation of parents and communities in school management.

Using existing resources, both manifest and latent, of the system and society to leverage change

Existing resources at the level of the district, the block, “educational pools” and schools are used to bolster the reform process. By the same token, the reforms depend on existing social resources, which are a means of empowering communities so that they participate more actively in educational decision-making. From the outset, parent-teacher associations, teachers’ unions, NGOs and communities have been informed about and involved in micro-planning and social mobilization for EFA and for the enrollment and retention of girls. Village education committees bear considerable responsibility for decision-making and management, as well as for recruiting teachers and ensuring their regular attendance.

Lessons learned from South Asian experience

The experiences of India and Bangladesh confirm that scaling up is possible when education policy pursues the objective of reaching a substantial number of children in underprivileged milieux.

BRAC has been successfully taken to scale

BRAC expanded quickly, from 22 schools in 1985 to 30,000 in 2000, becoming the largest non-formal education program run by an NGO and an important stakeholder in the Bangladesh national education system.

The BRAC program initially offered the first three years of school, and was subsequently expanded to cover the first five years of elementary education. Today, BRAC is considering the possibility of running a few junior secondary schools, at least in places where official schools are not able to meet all the needs of the population.

Main outcomes of DPEP

DPEP has achieved its goal, namely, to make a substantial contribution to the current efforts of the central government. It has been implemented in 149 districts and 14 states, with the following results:

- In the areas supported by the project, enrollments in the first and second levels of primary education showed a sharp increase: 67% in the first level and 64% in the second.
- Thanks to DPEP, the number of girls enrolled in school has risen by 67%.
- The 1996 assessment of academic achievement showed that average

fifth-year performance in language studies rose from 34% above average grades to 37%, with the best grades being obtained in mathematics.

- Classroom activities showed increased teacher productivity: many teachers make and use their own teaching materials, having received a small annual grant of 500 rupees.
- Strategic partnerships established at grassroots level have brought important results: community involvement in program implementation has increased sharply due to the institutionalization of village education committees (VECs). VECs were established under the decentralization policy adopted by the central government to transfer responsibility to local decision-making bodies. DPEP has encouraged members of these committees to build on their skills in order to take a more active role in the school.
- The fact that the government bodies involved, teachers, NGOs, elected representatives, the chairpersons of the VECs and the general public have all committed to the EFA goals and the fact that education policy targets the poorest are highly favorable for the Indian economy and its growth prospects.

To be sure, political will is once again a fundamental factor. Apart from the leadership issue, analysis of the factors and conditions conducive to successful scaling up in Bangladesh and India reveals a great variety of positive factors, notably the simplicity and accessibility of the models used, the policy of low costs and efficient use of funding, decentralization and local participation, management and supervision, targeted strategies and positive discrimination.

Political will

Political will is reflected in (i) the building of a political consensus on education, particularly between the federal and state governments; (ii) better funding at all levels; and (iii) the cooperation and support of civil society.

In the case of India, this political will crystallized in a consensus that the right to education for all constitutes a legal obligation of the government. The central government undertook a large-scale reform of the education system, increased education funding accordingly, and gave the states a greater role in the management and implementation of reform, while at the same time providing considerable capacity-building support. It also encouraged the state governments by giving them the discretionary latitude needed to make changes and participate in the educational reform effort, while providing financial assistance through major programs such as DPEP. A variety of strategies were also devised to involve civil society organizations and communities, which make a real contribution to the collective effort to reach out to all. Lastly, the government has supported networks for exchange of

experience and ideas, encouraging synergies and the retention and accumulation of lessons learned from experience.

The importance of a committed leadership is not limited to the political sphere. Where civil society is concerned, the example of BRAC in Bangladesh demonstrates that programs implemented by NGOs can scale up from the pilot stage to the national level when they have a clear-sighted, strongly motivated leadership backed up by competent staff that is committed to equity and devoted to innovation and the search for educational alternatives.

The simplicity and accessibility of the models used

To facilitate acceptance by grassroots stakeholders (teachers and communities in particular) with relatively limited capacity, the programs use simplified modules designed on the basis of research into educational requirements in contexts of extreme poverty. The curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, textbooks, school buildings and facilities are all governed by simple rules that are easily assimilated and applied by stakeholders, which makes scaling up and quality control easier. In fact, the idea is to start with a structure having few basic components that, once they are well established, can be diversified and, as capacity and experience are accumulated, become more complex.

This deliberate simplicity is combined with a policy of accessibility with respect to the target population. Schools are located within communities, and the communities themselves choose the locations. The schools are therefore easily accessible for children, particularly girls. Teachers are hired locally to limit instability and absenteeism while ensuring that they are socially and culturally close to communities. BRAC, for example, prefers to hire married women in order to encourage enrollments of girls. The meager furnishings of classrooms correspond to the conditions children are familiar with at home. The school schedule, teaching aids and educational content are all adapted to the requirements and needs of the surrounding environment. The local cultural heritage, particularly, tales, songs and dances, is used to reinforce learning and to help teachers direct and manage their classes. Combinations such as multigrade and double-shift classes can also be adapted to specific local circumstances.

In sum, program development is geared to meet the demand expressed by the population, and the design and implementation of program models take account of what local populations know, know how to do and wish to do, in accordance with their respective capabilities, limitations and cultures.

The policy of low costs and efficient use of funding

Generally speaking, unit costs are relatively low in the Bangladesh and Indian experiences analyzed here. For infrastructure, easy-to-build, low-cost prototypes of classrooms are used. There is virtually no school furniture: children

sit and work on mats placed on the floor. The use of teachers hired from the local community (BRAC) and of “para-teachers” in India, combined with short initial training sessions, also help to keep the cost of teaching staff low. Thus, there is an entire policy aimed at maximizing low-cost approaches in order to ensure viable financing for the drive toward education for all. This does not preclude a concern for quality. For example, existing assessments show that although BRAC pupils have a higher unit cost, they perform better than pupils in public schools. The reason is that investments are selected with a view to cost-effectiveness in terms of their impact on learning outcomes. For example, 50% of BRAC’s education budget goes to textbooks, and as a result, each pupil has a textbook in all the fundamental subjects. In both Bangladesh and India, noteworthy efforts have been devoted to in-service teacher training. Substantial funding is also allocated to supervision, making possible a system in which supervisors are close to teachers, make frequent visits and provide sustained counseling on teaching methods. Investment based on finding the most cost-effective measures for a given impact on learning has thus been essential to the success of these experiences.

Decentralization and local participation

The transfer of powers and resources to local institutions is supposed to increase local participation. To encourage this process, both India and Bangladesh have adopted strategies to support the institutional and technical capacities of local stakeholders, at the level of districts, blocks, grassroots communities and individual schools.

One of the most important characteristics of decentralization is that it makes the school “community property”. Management committees in Bangladesh and village education committees in India are the frameworks used to rally communities to participate in school management and to translate such participation into concrete actions. These bodies have administrative powers and decision-making responsibilities. Communities are encouraged, within these frameworks, to receive funding and to take responsibility for building classrooms. They take part in micro-planning, the enrollment of children (particularly girls) and the improvement of attendance rates.

Decentralization also means the diversification of educational models in response to the diversity of the demand expressed by communities, according to their individual circumstances and needs. This is a pre-condition for reaching all, since a centralized, uniform model cannot do so in certain conditions, particularly for the poorest, most isolated and most vulnerable groups. Recognition of this fact requires the government to establish partnerships with various local authorities, public organizations and civil society organizations.

In both India and Bangladesh, non-governmental programs have made a

huge contribution to the inclusion of the poorest groups, supplementing the efforts of government. Local authorities play a crucial role in supporting teacher development and in building community capacity.

Decentralization is thus productive in that it marshals resources for taking reforms to scale and making them sustainable, but success will also depend on a number of other factors: appropriate assignment of roles, networks for dialogue and cooperation, management systems and capacity building programs at all levels, performance evaluation criteria and procedures that enhance transparency and accountability.

Managerial and supervisory staff

The practice of establishing local experiments for subsequent scaling up is supported by managerial, evaluation and support structures. The managerial staff consists of competent managers recruited at high level to provide administrative, material and pedagogical support to schools. Resource centers are set up for teachers at district and block level to plan, implement and assess teacher training. Learning centers, libraries and reading centers support both learning and the socialization of learners. The supervisory system is based on a staff numerous enough to allow very close supervision of teachers. Supervision is geared more toward pedagogical support and counseling than toward inspection.

To further improve programs, ongoing research is conducted into the problems faced and the results obtained. This process follows well-defined procedures for communication and feedback between the actors and institutions involved, backed up by the implementation of an information system. Stability among the managerial and supervisory staff, which makes for continuity and accumulation of experience, is regarded as a key to successful scaling up.

Targeted strategies and positive discrimination

In both India and Bangladesh, the programs are primarily – exclusively in the case of the BRAC – aimed at the poorest groups, with special emphasis on girls. To reach this target, they define specific approaches for each context and introduce positive discrimination measures. In addition to building on familiar models for recruitment of teachers, curriculum development, teaching materials and textbooks, these approaches all take account of the constraints, standard social practices and needs of girls, the poor and the marginalized. They view education in a broader context of poverty reduction and empowerment of women. Measures to encourage and support the development of these groups are being taken both in the education system

(early childhood development programs) and in other sectors (health, micro-credit, legal support, etc.). The management committees and VECs take part in the awareness-raising and mobilization campaigns to promote education for girls. They also work on micro-planning and on creating the conditions required for girls and women to be well received in school systems.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the central question from the standpoint of the ADEA is the following: what useful and usable lessons for the African contexts can be drawn from these experiences of scaling up, conducted in a variety of situations in Central America and South Asia? This is the question that two African delegations from ten countries (a delegation to Central America, consisting of Benin, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali and Niger; and one to South Asia, consisting of Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Tanzania) sought to answer after returning from their respective study visits to these regions. These delegations were led by education ministers and included educators, representatives of teachers' unions and representatives of parent-teacher associations. Among the many answers they produced collectively, we may briefly summarize those relating to the scaling up and sustainability of reforms, which were given the greatest weight.

The first lesson has to do with time, which is an important parameter because scaling up is a protracted process. All stages of the reform – design, experimentation, extension and full-scale implementation – require time to mature. Thus, initiating a reform campaign is not enough; one must also maintain it long enough for it to succeed. As this requirement often runs afoul of changes of government and the swing of the political pendulum, it is crucial to build a political consensus regarding the reforms in order to have some chance of continuity in the reform effort despite political contingencies and the turnover inherent in the democratic process. The gradual approach to scaling up is also a long-term matter: one must think big, but start small. From the quantitative standpoint, extension of the reform in terms of the numbers served and geographical area covered requires time to experiment, evaluate, inform the public and marshal resources. Qualitatively, developing an innovation and applying it in more complex forms require time for initiation, implementation, reconstruction and gradual formulation, or even invention and creativity with respect to the specific features of each context.

The second lesson is that, in a context of under-development, government involvement has both great importance and certain limits. Successful scaling up of a reform to the national level depends on the government's interest and support, as well as a sustainable political framework for implementation. Without these, the reform remains marginal with respect to national

policy and eventually fizzles out. Commitment on the part of the national authorities takes the form of adequate funding; legislative, administrative and institutional support; a communication policy; and long-term planning and monitoring.

It has been observed, however, that even if the government fully meets all these responsibilities, its activity will have objective limits in that it neglects the population categories and geographical areas that are not easily reached by centralized provision. This situation calls for the emergence of other stakeholders that are better equipped for strategies targeted specifically on these categories and areas. In addition to awareness-raising and social mobilization campaigns, the full participation of such stakeholders in the dialogue over policy and reforms, from conception to implementation, is a necessary condition for success. Decentralization and partnership policies should clearly set out the assigned roles of each and encourage take-up of the reforms by these stakeholders (local authorities, NGOs, religious congregations and grassroots communities). If they are properly to exercise the powers devolved to them, these local stakeholders need not only a measure of decision-making and operational discretion, independence and creativity, but also government support in the form of resources and capacity building. Working toward scaling up by seeking synergies with other actors does not mean that the state is shirking its responsibilities. Rather, this is a participatory strategy that involves various sectors of society in education policy and that seeks to identify and use the comparative advantages of all parties involved.

The third lesson concerns the sustainability of financing. Apart from the obligatory marshalling of resources, scaling up raises the issue of cost-effectiveness. The aim is not systematically to seek the cheapest option without regard to other considerations, but to gauge costs against school system performance in terms of access, equity, quality and, most important, the success of the learning process. Priorities for educational investment are therefore established on the basis of an assessment of their impact, with the aim of making the most efficient possible use of scarce resources. To this end, we must look for significant differences in performance between systems that, other things being equal, dispose of virtually the same financial resources. Efficient use of resources is a decisive factor in scaling up, as it allows a country to accomplish more with less and to fund the bulk of the scaling-up process from domestic sources. This is also the factor that determines whether a reform will be sustainable.

The fourth lesson concerns the flexibility of the experimental models used. Flexibility offers more scope for scaling up because it allows provision to be diversified and adapted to the needs of contexts that differ in both space and time. It also encourages acceptance of the model by local stakeholders

and the emergence of the participation which decentralization and partnerships were intended to foster. The reason is that flexibility allows for the uniqueness of each school and its ownership by the local community, as well as the latter's desire and ability to support the relevance and quality of the educational project undertaken in the school in response to the needs and limitations of the local context and the demand expressed by households. Diametrically opposed to the rigidity of the centralized, one-size-fits-all model, flexibility admits all kinds of adaptation, up to and including alternative strategies as long as these strategies pursue the goals laid down for education and training, regardless of the means used to achieve them, as long as they are relevant and effective. Whence the importance of re-creating the conditions required for success in the local context, rather than simply reproducing the innovation in its initial form. In short, this lesson highlights the importance of a policy that is geared toward local demand and attentive to the diversity of the needs and situations of different social categories, in order to give them truly equal opportunity for access to education and success, as well as learning opportunities that are relevant to the problems they face in their daily lives. From the standpoint of extension and scaling up, the reforms' attractiveness to local populations and their subsequent ability to spread depend largely on such adaptability to the diversity of demand.

This summary of the lessons from outside Africa that are regarded as relevant in their respective contexts by key stakeholders in African education allows us to reformulate the issue of transferability. First, the assertion that each context is unique does not preclude the recognition of similarities between contexts. In this respect, the observations of African participants did not fail to note that their counterparts faced some similar constraints, such as gender disparities in access to education, poor coverage in underprivileged rural areas, the barriers created by the poverty and illiteracy of the population segments concerned, inadequate local capacities, and the limitations on the central government's resources and capabilities. Such similarities suggest that even if a reform cannot be transposed in its entirety, studying it can offer insights and tools that will enrich our thinking and our actions. In the present case, the African participants took a great interest in the affirmative action approaches used to pursue equity, the models that seek to retain teachers in rural areas through local hiring and management, community-run food programs and mobilization of the latent resources of society to supplement those allocated by the government. It certainly seemed to the participants that these approaches and strategies were appropriate responses to the problems they themselves face in the conduct of education policy.

In contrast, they pointed to differences in context primarily in cases where they considered that an observed innovation was not transferable to Africa. The lack of tables and benches in classrooms in India and Bangladesh, self-

learning by pupils in Guatemala, the level of responsibility of community education associations in El Salvador and other innovations led to real culture shock. But even here, surprise works in favor of learning, in the sense that a “controversial” fact causes what one might call an epistemological shift. It exposes us to conceptions and behaviors stemming from a different history and culture, which, when compared with our own conceptions and behavior, gives us a broader view of things, providing some perspective on traditional modes of thought and action that are firmly entrenched in us as the only proper ways to think and act. In short, we also learn by comparing our experience with others that we had not known before. The process is therefore real training in how to bring an open mind to bear on issues of reform and how it should be conducted.

Any reform will bear the imprint of a specific context, and its achievements must be viewed in the perspective of a history, culture and standard of social behavior that cannot be transposed to a different context. This means, as was pointed out above, that the lessons learned from a given success or failure cannot be transferred mechanically. It is still possible and helpful to learn from the experience of others, however, in that studying this experience provides some distance from and perspective on our own experience, giving us a richer, broader point of view. In the light of lessons drawn from successes and failure, the necessary (re)construction will no longer have to start from scratch, but will be inspired by ideas and actions that have broadened our views, opened our minds and provided methodologies and tools that enhance our capacity to make reform an operational reality.