



Association pour  
le développement  
de l'éducation en Afrique (ADEA)



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Ministry  
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Mali

Press release

## Experts prepare decision-makers for building a consensus to make school accessible to all African children

**Bamako, June 19, 2007** – Most of the 77 million children who do not have access to education come from the poorest and most deprived families. Turning the right to education for all children into a reality is a challenge that must tackle the financial hurdles that these families cannot overcome. Education is necessary to “have a chance to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty” and “essential to actively exercise the rights and duties of a democratic citizenship”. The Bamako meeting “considers itself an opportunity to exchange experiences, share knowledge and collegial reflection” with a view to building a consensus on the ways and means of “saving tens of millions of children from marginalization, exclusion, poverty and illness”.

This was the issue presented by Mamadou Ndoeye, the Executive Secretary of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), in his introductory statement, to the “International Conference on School Fee Abolition : Planning for Quality and Financial Sustainability” on Tuesday, June 19, in the Malian capital,. This conference was attended by delegations from 23 countries as well as experts and decision-makers representing intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, development cooperation agencies, financial institutions and civil society organizations.

Addressing nearly 200 participants, Mr. Ndoeye asserted that the initiative to abolish school fees was not a panacea but an answer to the problem raised. Consequently, in terms of the technical meeting that will take place during the first two days, he pointed out that the priority will be to produce “a relevant range of possibilities and mechanisms for planning education quality and sustainable financing, a perfected and systematic operational guide for implementation, as well as strengthened national proposals in order to go forward”.

“This rich yield”, he continued, will be used “to enrich the policy dialogue between the ministers and their national and external partners during the second part of the conference,” on June 21 and 22.

The UNICEF representative Isselmou Ould Boukhary, stated, “...the right to education is an undeniable, universal and indivisible right; undeniable because it is non-negotiable, universal and indivisible because all children, notably those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as girls, who are often overlooked, must enjoy all the rights”. Because the abolition of school fees will entail an excessive demand, he stressed, “it is essential that the improvement of access is not done at the expense of quality” and “we must ensure sustainability in terms of financing as well as the involvement of and ownership by the communities and parents of the educational policies”. Mr. Ould Boukhary renewed the commitment of his organization “to work with governments and other partners to ensure greater access to a quality education for children”.

On behalf of the World Bank, Atou Seck pointed out that “if we all agree on the validity of this conference and the goals it is pursuing, the major question is the following: how, to achieve schooling for all children through the reduction of school fees; are we going to finance the



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expenditures that, until now, have been borne by the families, especially in a context where development priorities are multiplying?”

In his opening speech for the technical meeting, Barthélémy Togo, the Secretary General of the Ministry of National Education of Mali, called on the participants “to reflect on the alternatives that could offset the effects of eliminating school fees”, because “school education has a cost and will always have a cost because of the imperative to create and maintain an appropriate physical, pedagogical and academic environment and to introduce the quality inputs needed for training”. “The abolition of school fees,” Mr. Togo continued, “therefore requires alternatives to the cost of children at school, a redefinition of the financing policies of our education systems, a harmonization and adaptation of support from our development partners, while observing the internal balance between the different education levels and the implications of our economic and social development programs.”

The representatives of the development agencies and civil society delivered brief messages in which they asked the delegates to include the results of their reflections in a global strategy that preserves macro-economic stability, to ensure that the policies chosen are financially sustainable in a context of limited resources, to involve civil society and actors in education to a greater degree for better resource management, to continue to make education for girls a priority and to take into account questions related to teacher quality and the improvement of their living conditions.

Delegations from the following 23 countries were present at the opening of the conference, which ends on June 22: Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Papua-New Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo, Yemen and Zambia.

**Bamako, June 19, 2007**

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**For more information, consult the ADEA Web site: [www.ADEAnet.org](http://www.ADEAnet.org) or contact:**

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