





**Issues in the Implementation of  
Education Sector Programs and Projects  
in sub-Saharan Africa**



with reflections from the  
DAE Task Force Meetings  
October 1993 - Angers, France



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With reflections from the  
Donors to African Education Task Force Meetings

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Donors to African Education

The views and opinions expressed in this volume are those of individual participants at the Task Force Meetings and should not be attributed to the DAE, to its members or affiliated organizations or to any individual acting on behalf of the DAE.

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## **Preface**

This document was prepared for the 1993 DAE Task Force Meeting in Angers, France. The principal authors were Ward Heneveld of the Human Resources Division, Africa Technical Department and Chris Thomas of the Education and Social Policy Department of the World Bank. Various drafts have been reviewed by member agencies of the DAE, by the DAE Secretariat and by external reviewers. The final draft has been edited to reflect the discussions at Angers.

## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the implementation of policies, programs and projects to improve education in sub-Saharan Africa, taking into consideration discussions at the DAE Task Force Meeting in October, 1993. The paper has examined factors that influence the implementation of such programs. Seven areas of concern were identified: the national context in which the efforts to improve education are undertaken; the goals of donors, governments, and interest groups; the characteristics of program and project design; the governments' and donors' capacities to implement these efforts; project "ownership;" the management and administration of project funding; and, the contribution that monitoring and reporting makes to implementation. As discussions at the Task Force meeting showed, none of these issues is separate and independent of the others. In fact, one of the difficulties in making practical recommendations on the problems related to project and program implementation in Africa is the complex interaction of the problems that confront governments and donors. This paper and the DAE's 1993 meeting have attempted to unravel that complexity in the hope that both the African ministers of education and donors will find locally valid concrete responses to the issues and recommendations that have been made.

# Introduction

1. This paper is about the implementation of policies, programs and projects to improve education in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite continuing high demand for education and major investments in this sector, the region's education systems are not producing the intellectual and human resources needed for sustained economic growth and political stability. While there is general agreement about the need for educational reform in most African countries, and some consensus as to what those reforms should seek to accomplish, the implementation of investments has not had much impact on student learning or on the conditions that should improve student learning. This paper seeks to define the issues that inhibit the successful implementation of activities seeking to improve and expand education in sub-Saharan Africa, using discussions among African Ministers of Education, senior African educators, and donors at the DAE Task Force meeting in Angers, France, in October, 1993, to inform these definitions and to make recommendations about strategies to overcome them.

2. Major educational reforms are on the development agenda in almost every African country from Mauritania to South Africa, despite economic recession, inadequate public finance, and political turmoil. However, because of these difficult conditions in the region, national resources are not even adequate for the recurrent expenditures on education, let alone for the investments required to bring about improvements. Consequently, external donor agencies are playing a significant, sometimes dominant, role in the funding and direction of reforms. This role involves funding the majority of investment expenditures and occasionally recurrent expenditures as well. It is accepted that for education to improve in the region, donor support will have to continue at its current high levels. The donors' major influence on expenditures, and therefore on policies, presents a challenge to the donor-recipient relationship to ensure that learners receive a better education. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

3. In fact, the record of successful implementation of education programs and projects in sub-Saharan Africa is not considered good. For instance, a recent review of educational policy reform in the region judged that only 13 out of 145 policies studied had been effectively implemented (See J. Craig, *Comparative African Experiences in Implementing Educational Policies*).

Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1990). On the donors' side, by way of example, the World Bank had, by the beginning of Fiscal Year 1993, commitments to the education sector in Africa totaling \$1.2 billion and planned to disburse \$304 million over the course of the fiscal year, yet only \$117 million was actually disbursed. In addition to this shortfall, the changes in teaching-learning process and improvements in student learning have been difficult to attribute to donor-supported projects. In sum, efforts to improve education in the region are not being successfully implemented.

4. This paper looks at seven issues related to program and project implementation. It focuses on those aspects of the relationship between governments and donors that may best illuminate how the partnership can be improved. The issues, posed as questions, are as follows:

- (a) What national **conditions** facilitate the effective implementation of programs to improve education?
- (b) How do the **goals** sought from education by governments, by interest groups, and by donors influence implementation?
- (c) What elements of program and project **design** influence the implementation of educational change?
- (d) How is implementation influenced by the **capacities** of governments and of donors?
- (e) What is program “**ownership**,” and what factors influence local ownership in programs and projects to improve African education?
- (f) How do the form, management and administration of the **financing** of education programs and projects influence implementation, particularly with respect to funds provided by donors?
- (g) What is the role of **monitoring and reporting** in ensuring effective implementation of educational improvement activities?

5. Of course, answers to these questions will vary from country to country, so the paper tries not to be prescriptive. It attempts to clarify these issues at a general level, suggests how they might be addressed in national contexts, and gives examples of ways that donors and governments are trying to increase the effectiveness of their partnership and improve education in sub-Saharan Africa. A final section summarizes the agreement and disagreements among participants in the DAE Task Force meeting and offers recommendations for follow-up action.



Conditions for successful implementation:  
Economic strength and pluralism

6. African nations are undergoing the double transitions of restructuring their economies and increasing the degree of pluralism among the participants in development. In economic restructuring, a number of countries have adopted measures to restore macro-economic balance, liberalize prices, reduce the role of the state in the economy and promote the market. Throughout the region, participation in politics at both the national and local levels is increasing, participation by community and non-governmental organizations in development is growing, and the private sector plays an increasing role in economic and social affairs. These trends were supported during discussions at the DAE Task Force meeting.

7. Countries where such changes have taken hold have generally seen improvements in the growth and distribution of income and have succeeded in mobilizing sufficient external funding to sustain progress. Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda all show promising signs of economic growth. In these countries people are also becoming more involved in and committed to local and national development initiatives.

8. The education sector is deeply affected by these changes in the political and economic environments. On the one hand, there is strong pressure to cut costs and increase efficiency. On the other, there is popular pressure to increase access and quality of educational services. Ministries of education have been positioned as «middle-range» institutions, charged with the difficult task of negotiating between the need to meet the popular demand for education at all levels and the pressure to bow to developmental priorities and often harsh economic and budgetary realities.

9. Several countries have responded to this challenge by instituting reform programs focused on cost and finance, sectoral management, structural reform of educational delivery systems, and internal and external efficiency of education systems. The results of reform programs that combine sound economic and educational reform have been impressive in Ghana and Guinea: sector management has improved, unit costs have fallen, quality of education has increased, and enrollment ratios have risen. Reforms have helped both to increase the impact of existing investments and to attract new investment (*see*

*Box 1).* Similar programs are being introduced in Kenya, Zambia and Côte d'Ivoire.

**Box 1. Laying the foundation for improvement:  
The Ghana educational sector adjustment programs**

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Ghana is currently completing the sixth year of an education sector adjustment program. The program was designed to reverse years of stagnation and decline in the education sector, caused in part by severe macro-economic difficulties and in part by poor planning and management in the sector. The adjustment program was built on the recommendations of a Government White Paper of 1973 which had never been implemented because of a lack of funds and elite group opposition to changing the status quo.

The results of the adjustment program have been impressive. The pre-university education cycle was reduced from 17 to 12 years, primary education enrollment ratios increased from 65 per cent in 1987 to 82 per cent in 1992, progression to secondary school has reached 90 per cent, intakes into higher education have grown for the first time in almost two decades, and the ratio of textbooks to pupils in primary schools was brought to 1:1 in key subjects. Improvements in learning outcomes, however, have not yet been observed. A number of important management and budget changes have made the sector more effective and efficient, and thus helped attract further investment. As a complement to the adjustment program the donor community made more than US \$250 million available for specific education projects.

Although the period of formal adjustment is nearing its end, the Ghanaian government and donors recognize that continuous change and adaptation will be necessary to maintain sector effectiveness in a rapidly changing environment.

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10. The education sector will always be confronted by the need to adapt itself to changes in the economic, political and social environments. Adaptations will most certainly include further administrative and civil service reform, a greater role for the private sector, increased demand for education at all levels, and attention to the complicated questions of equity, quality, pluralistic participation, and institutional development in education. Also, as the Vice-President of CIDA Ms. Carolyn McCaskie pointed out in her speech at Angers, institutional development will require improvements in "aid management." The ministry of education, as one of the country's largest employers and the custodian of its human resources, plays the critical role in implementing activities that respond to these challenges.

11. Both donors and governments increasingly see economic restructuring and political pluralism as the basis for sustained growth and effective

### *Conditions for successful implementation*

implementation of sector programs and policies. The question is no longer one of whether such policies should be pursued, but **how** they should be pursued. *Within the education sector, attention is being focused on how to develop sound sectoral goals and strategies, promote ownership and commitment, build implementation capacity, improve counterpart support, revise procurement and disbursement rules and methods, and put in place appropriate systems for monitoring and reporting.* Given African governments' dependence on external financing for reforms, successful change will depend largely on the ability of donors and governments to forge a working partnership and to exhibit flexibility in implementation.

## **Whose goals for education?**

12. The government, national interest groups, and donors often have different goals for education in a country. To the extent that the goals of the various participants and supporters of educational reform are shared, the prospects for the successful implementation will be greater. If the groups' goals differ significantly, reform will be difficult.

13. The government, through the ministries managing the delivery of educational services, has the primary responsibility for implementing the nation's mandate to educate the population and to create the human resource base that is an essential part of economic development. However, the government's goals for education are often not translated into clear objectives and programs that respond to national needs. Internal factors that can impede the consonance between goals and programs include inadequate management skills in the ministries concerned, pressures from constituencies, and private agendas of responsible functionaries. The result is often inertia for existing policies and plans, without consideration of how current resource allocations make these policies and plans unimplementable. If there is change, it can tend to favor the groups inside and outside education ministries who have the most influence, and the common good may suffer.

14. Diverse interest groups can limit a nation's ability to reform education. In some countries, teacher organizations, student groups, different economic groups and various religious groups may all have their own narrowly defined priorities and different agendas for education. For example, governments have found it difficult to reduce inefficiencies in higher education because of student opposition to changes that will reduce the benefits they now receive. Similarly, different religious groups throughout Africa have at times pursued educational agendas that conflict with government goals. On the other hand, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and business groups have been drawn increasingly into national dialogues. In Malawi, for example, a group coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce and including NGO representatives and businessmen has begun to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture to discuss national needs and priorities. In Zambia, the recent preparation of a social recovery project involved community members in the project's design. Taking this involvement one step further, one discussion group at the Task Force meeting proposed focusing more on skills needs for the private sector in African education.

### *Whose goals for education?*

15. Finally, donors often have their own goals with respect to educational improvement. Uninfluenced by local pressure groups, they tend to be the most vociferous proponents for improving the efficiency and equity of education services. These goals are often reflected in the «conditions» attached to loans and grants for education, because local interest groups may prevent the open pursuit of such goals without pressure from outside. To the extent that donor pressure helps to make education more effective by reallocating budgets in favor of the most cost-effective classroom inputs, or more equitable by increasing the access to education of the most disadvantaged groups, conditionality can be a useful tool in development assistance for education. However, the Ministers of Education who were at Angers expressed “serious concern” about the way conditions are imposed, and their chairman Minister Parsuramen of Mauritius reported that conditionality «should be fully discussed in a real spirit of partnership.» Donor pressure to increase efficiency and equity, however, can be clouded by the agencies' own motives. Some agencies, such as those focusing on single issues like wildlife conservation or population control, may push narrow agendas for education that do not take into account the larger goals and the most pressing needs of the system. Other donors, often the bilaterals, are constrained in their effective response to national needs by the necessity to satisfy constituencies at home with respect to particular interests or to the tied expenditure of the funds provided. As a group, often led by the policy analyses of the World Bank, the donor community may sometimes unconsciously over-pressure individual countries and impose regional priorities even where country-specific circumstances suggest other solutions.

16. In the complex melange of agendas represented by government, donors, and specific interest groups, the focus on effective implementation of reforms that produce efficient and equitable contributions to a nation's human resource base can easily be lost. The best means for dealing with these various interests is to have all groups participate in open dialogue at the national level and for donors to recognize that national ownership of educational goals will only come as a result of such a dialogue in which the donor community is but one of the participants.

## The design of education sector programs and projects

17. In all development activities, good implementation begins with a sound program or project design. However, there has been a tendency to prepare more complex and demanding programs with the ensuing “over-design” of projects. Sound program or project design is based on strong economic and sector analysis, a medium- to long-term strategy for change, and identification of appropriate funding sources and mechanisms. In education, project design must also consider a critical and unique characteristic of education systems: the smallest operational unit in the system, the school, has a major impact on student learning and a high level of autonomy. The process that produces the design will usually contribute more to successful implementation if it is led by government, if it provides for input from expected beneficiaries such as community leaders and teachers, and if it is responded to flexibly by donors.

18. A good understanding of the issues that are faced by the economy and the sector is of fundamental importance when designing strategies for educational reform. In the region, there has been significant experience with methodologies for *country economic and education sector analyses*. For example, Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) have proven to be a useful tool for understanding the financing of education both in a country's macro-economic context and within the education sector. When completed diligently, sector analyses form the basis for policy dialogue within government and between government and specific interest groups in designing reform and assistance strategies and projects (*see Box 2*). The issue remains, however, of how to get everyone, especially in the countries with a multiplicity of donors, to accept and use a coherent single analytic framework.

19. Analysis and dialogue should lead to agreement on a *longer-term strategy* for the education sector, including the roles of government, beneficiaries, and the donor community. A comprehensive reform strategy allows for the government to increase donor coordination by, for instance, focusing donor resources on a part of a program for which a particular agency has a comparative technical or institutional advantage, or by getting a group of donors to jointly finance a «time slice» of an overall development strategy. A sectoral strategy also helps to focus management attention on key educational policy and implementation issues, rather than on the management of an uncoordinated

and complex collection of individual projects.

**Box 2. Education sector analysis:  
The first step in program design**

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A comprehensive education sector analysis covers seven key areas: (1) the general sector environment, including overall conditions, the legal framework, institutional capacity and equity considerations; (2) an assessment of public resource requirements and resource mobilization strategies; (3) an evaluation of the costs and benefits of investment options; (4) an understanding of the private demand for education; (5) a review of the social policy framework, including assessment of how synergies among human development investments can be exploited; (6) an assessment of the private sector's role and potential contribution to financing and provision of education; and (7) recommendations for action derived from an analysis of options based on national priorities, conditions, and international experience.

A 1992 Government of Zimbabwe-World Bank study, *A Review of Primary and Secondary Education: From Successful Expansion to Equity of Learning Achievements*, provides an example of good sector analysis. The study begins with an analysis of the labor market and the economy, ties in the expansion of the education system and then presents the problems regarding the large variation in quality at the secondary level. The main focus of the report is on increasing achievement levels in poorer performing schools. Many of the recommendations are straight forward but are well-supported by the data and their analysis. The study argues for improving teacher support services, management of schools at the regional level, and strengthening the analytical capacity of the central government, particularly with respect to achievement. All this would increase the efficiency of the school system and ultimately save on expenses.

The main recommendations of the report, however, concern equalizing the quality of education available to less advantaged schools, many of which are in rural areas. To this end, the report urges government to offer incentives to such schools, provide better materials, and more staff support. There is also a discussion of whether the central government should adopt a positive financial discrimination policy in favor of poorer schools, especially given large private contributions in the better schools.

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20. Some countries have experienced conflicts involving two or more ministries—often education, planning and finance—over the control of externally-funded investments in the sector. The Master Plan for the development of education in Mauritius is an excellent example of the kind of strategy statement that can be prepared if a government can avoid such conflicts and has the will to transcend internal interest groups and individual donor preferences.

### *Issues in implementation*

As a result of the DAE Task Force meeting, Mauritius is assisting Namibia in the development of its master plan. Participants at the meeting agreed that an overall strategy for education development is a key ingredient in the government's control of human resource development in its effective implementation. There was also a consensus that donors' short-term time horizons often get in the way of this longer-term thinking and the extended period of funding required to implement improvements.

21. Once a sector strategy has been identified, countries and donors must find appropriate *funding mechanisms*. There is a wide spectrum of grant and lending instruments that will support whatever local resources can be made available for the reform. However, in Africa, even minimal counterpart funding is often problematic because of the severe shortage of national resources, in which case the financing instruments proposed by donors become paramount and, unless care is exercised to avoid this outcome, the locus of ownership for the reform can tilt to the donor. No one instrument is necessarily better than any other. The choice of instrument needs to be based on country and donor capacity and on developmental goals for the sector.

22. There are three broad types of lending and grant instruments. First, in traditional projects, investments are appraised in detail and expenditure items and amounts are clearly specified at the outset. Specific investment projects are good for achieving limited objectives, such as expanding access to education through construction and materials provision. They are appropriate when a country has weak analytical and administrative capabilities and donors have clear objectives that they wish to help the country achieve. They are also appropriate when a country has a comprehensive strategy for the development of the education sector and has identified a part of that strategy's implementation for which it seeks donor financing.



## *Design of education sector programs*

23. Second, there are loans and grants under which the terms of the agreement between the donor and the country are more loosely defined and flexible, and under which a national agency is responsible for the detailed design, appraisal and supervision of specific investments. This type of project has the potential for allowing design to match more closely locally-determined needs and for building institutional capacity. In some cases donors have provided “time slice” financing of programs developed by the countries themselves. This approach allows some flexibility for the recipient to finance a given set of sectoral responsibilities for a fixed period of time. Projects that are more loosely defined require a higher standard of commitment and analytical capacity by beneficiaries, implementing agencies, and donors than does a traditional, specific investment project.

24. Third, some donors have provided general budgetary or balance of payments financing as part of an overall package of macro-economic reforms in support of a national program of educational sector reform. In exchange for implementing specific reforms and/or meeting agreed performance targets, a government receives tranching funds intended to alleviate its balance of payments deficit and facilitate increased recurrent financing for the education sector. The intent of this approach is to address three issues: i) establish a sectoral policy environment conducive to meeting reform goals; ii) work at the system level to develop permanent institutional capacity to manage and administer the reformed education sector; and iii) rationalize the allocation and use of resources in the sector. The World Bank, in conjunction with USAID, has supported education sector adjustment programs in Ghana, Guinea, and Lesotho, and independently in Nigeria, Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire. Additionally, USAID has provided «non-project assistance» in Malawi, Namibia, Benin and Mali. Often, such general budgetary support or balance of payments financing from one or more donors is complemented by traditional project funds from other donors. For example, the French Government played a central role in the Guinea operation where balance of payments support is provided by USAID and the World Bank. These experiences have demonstrated that there are a host of questions about when to provide such assistance, the kinds of analyses required beforehand, and about how to sequence and structure its disbursement.

25. No matter what type of project or program is considered, its implementation will suffer unless the design takes into account the understanding that operations within schools and classrooms (what school heads, teachers and students actually do) are important factors influencing educational outcomes, which, in addition, are often insulated from national policy pronouncements. This means that, in education, project design must take into account the *interaction* among program inputs *at the school level*, recognizing that the full impact of school inputs on student learning is greater than the sum of their individual effects. Project and program designs in education must plan for this school-level implementation, taking into account local school conditions and system management factors that facilitate local authority and responsibility for implementation. Discussion groups at the Task Force meeting suggested that

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the complex integration of components at the local level might be better worked out through experiments before trying to implement them nationally.

26. The school-level factor is usually not considered adequately when preparation of strategies and projects relies heavily on the inputs of donor agency staff and foreign consultants—an all too frequent occurrence. Planning by outsiders or at a distance creates a number of problems. First and foremost, the design will probably ignore essential significant elements of the local situation. For example, there are textbook projects that provide books and storage lockers to schools that have no dry and secure rooms in which to place the lockers. Similarly, one project component may provide training in school management to school heads through in-service courses, but the training may ignore their responsibility for encouraging, monitoring and strengthening the teachers' use of textbooks that the same project is supplying to the schools. Second, if outsiders dominate in the preparation process, accountability for project performance, institutional memory and long-term commitment to sustaining changes will probably suffer because local interest groups have not embraced the reform as their own. Even effective donor staff will eventually be transferred to other projects or other countries. Third, there is often a feeling of alienation among local staff who must implement projects that they have not created, but the consequences of which they must endure.

27. The tendency for donor representatives and consultants to dominate in designing a project raises a fundamental question: Why do African governments not take the lead in the process of preparing education strategies and projects? One reason may be that countries with pressing budgetary and foreign exchange problems feel that they do not have the freedom to decline externally financed programs. The very lack of national resources condemns them to accept all externally designed and tightly conditioned offers of foreign assistance, even those programs which run contrary to their national sector policies. Another reason may be that government representatives fear that they may demonstrate a lack of expertise in front of internationally-experienced donor staff if they assert themselves during the design process so that, as one discussion group in Angers observed, they remain silent in meetings with donors and donors take this silence as agreement. Despite this worry about who designs education reforms, countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Mozambique and Uganda have taken a leading role in carrying out their own economic and sector analyses; Mauritius and Zambia have designed their own reform strategies; and Chad has just completed preparation of a project for World Bank assistance that has involved various interest groups, led by the government, in its preparation. In these cases external agencies have helped to fill specific resource and technical needs. Where national governments have prepared and adopted coherent comprehensive sector policy statements, donors have often welcomed such initiatives and hastened to align their support behind such programs. Capacity for more local responsibility, as in these examples, undoubtedly exists in all countries, and donors and governments should agree to encourage more local autonomy and responsibility, and to give highest

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priority to projects initiated and prepared by the countries themselves.

28. To summarize, in the design of programs and the preparation of projects, decisions must be made about the type and complexity of necessary analyses to be undertaken, the nature of the longer-term strategy for development of the sector, and the type of funding mechanism to be used for external assistance. Considerations affecting these decisions are the importance of the school's role in determining the success of implementation and the nature of the relationship between the government, national interest groups and donors. Working through these issues to formulate a potentially effective project or program in a given country is a complex and difficult process that needs to be thought through carefully each time a new initiative is contemplated.

## **Governments' and donors' capacity for implementation**

29. The capacity of African governments to implement projects and programs in education has deteriorated in the last 25 years. At independence, African nations inherited a colonial administrative structure that has been sustained, in part at least, by the continued presence of expatriate officials in ministries of education, particularly in Francophone Africa. Today, these systems have rigidified a bureaucratic culture that, in most countries, cannot be supported by available resources or personnel. The weak capacity for planning and management was the issue most cited at the DAE Task Force meeting as hampering implementation.

30. Over the years, ministries of education in sub-Saharan Africa have had to respond to changes in educational development needs and objectives, and to changes in the political, social, and economic environments in which they operate. In the 1960s and 1970s emphasis was placed on developing skills to satisfy specific manpower requirements, but in the 1980s and 1990s the emphasis switched to the provision of mass general education with increased attention given to such complex issues as equity, quality and management. Growing political, social, and economic instability in the 1980s made the results of actions to improve education more uncertain. Action has become more difficult in a more complex and unstable world.

31. At the same time, the declining resource base for public programs and for remuneration of public officials has depressed motivation, encouraged corruption, and driven many competent professionals from public service. Today, the public service's implementation effectiveness is hampered in many countries by a plethora of problems that were cited by the DAE Task Force: staff instability (high turnover at the top echelons of ministries of education, poor attendance, inefficient use of time); poor working relationships among government officials, university administrators and NGOs; continuing «brain drain» (internally from public to private sector and externally, to foreign countries); and, undeveloped communication networks (among and between national and donor institutions and within ministries of education). Where expertise continues to exist, it is often poorly utilized as decisions on the management of implementation are driven increasingly by political and personal considerations.

32. Donors' responses to these problems have had their own negative results, calling into question the donors' capacity to ensure effective project and program implementation. First, as expatriate managers have departed from African ministries and local incentive systems have discouraged effective performance by their replacements, donors have relied increasingly on foreign technical assistance, and on training programs abroad to develop local skills. In general these attempts to improve implementation have been less than successful. Technical advisors have tended to replace their local counterparts in operational roles as donors strive to ensure that programs of action are implemented as planned. When this occurs, local staff see that they can turn their attention to other matters, or they are often intimidated by the foreign expertise. Over time, local will to act is sapped. Numerous commentators at the DAE Task Force meeting called for more local consultants and higher involvement of local professionals to combat this problem. Training, especially when abroad, has had a similar result. Trainees look forward to the travel and per diems, needing the remuneration and opportunity for outside experience to shore up an unsatisfactory income and professional life at home. At its worst, long-term training abroad encourages the African official to consider not returning home. The donors' reliance on technical assistance may have a similar outcome. It is all too frequent that an African in one country becomes a foreign expert in another and is replaced at home by a less qualified colleague and foreign advisor, thus countering the argument in favor of local consultants. In these circumstances, the donors' credibility in calling for increased implementation capacity in African ministries is questionable. A report of the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department describes the development of these problems over the last thirty years (*The World Bank's Role in Human Resource Development in sub-Saharan Africa: Education, Training, and Technical Assistance*, Report No. 12144, 1993; also, E. Berg, *Rethinking Technical Cooperation: Reforms for Capacity Building in Africa*. New York: UNDP and Development Alternatives, Inc., 1993).

33. The establishment of special units in ministries of education to manage and coordinate donor-supported interventions has been another response to problems of implementation. These units, variously called PIUs (project implementation units) or PMUs (project management units), may facilitate project implementation by improving managerial oversight and accountability, but many participants, both donors and ministers, questioned their effectiveness. Unless there is a clear division of labor between such units and existing line departments, they usually do not improve the capacity of the line units in the ministry to carry out their responsibilities. In fact, over time, externally funded PIUs have had the effect of demobilizing the regular ministerial departments. They rarely support capacity building of the ministry unless the external resources, which often exceed those in local budgets, are channelled through the national budget process. The UNDP has identified "several unwanted consequences (of PIUs), for example, over-centralization, a continued dependence on external resources (consultants, funds) rather than

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national/local expertise or funding, and a reduced ability to integrate program activities within ongoing institutional operations and to assure sustainability” (“Discussion Note on Building Country Capacity for Managing Innovation and Change in Basic Education.” New York: UNDP, 1993). The dilemma of ensuring effective management and accountability through a special unit versus strengthening ownership, capacity-building, and sustainability by absorbing project responsibilities in regular government units is faced in every country, and, as was pointed out in Angers, innovation and experimentation with “more effective mechanisms than PIUs” are needed (as has been done in Ghana).

34. Despite these problems, some ministries of education in Africa appear well organized to respond to these challenges, and others have begun to rethink their organization and operations. Donors, as well, are reconsidering how they should help ministries to develop their capacity for implementation.

35. All bureaucracies have problems responding to these principles, but there are signs that ministries of education in Africa are beginning to pay attention to them. In Zambia, the new strategy for educational reform responds to the changed political environment, encouraging the Ministry of Education to take pride in what it can do. In Malawi and Tanzania, private sector groups have begun working with government officials in policy dialogues and in planning educational reform. In Uganda, a project to foster teacher development and school improvement is just getting started with USAID and World Bank support. In line with the Uganda Government's devolution of most financial responsibilities to the district level starting this year, the project will be led at the district level by committees that include civil administrators, local education administrators, and teacher training college heads. In Senegal, the construction of schools has been contracted out to a non-profit general contracting firm (*see Box 3*); and in Ghana the Ministry of Education is asking village school committees to participate in the selection of headmasters and to ensure regular attendance of children and staff. At the same time, donors are no longer comfortable with the traditional technical assistance and training responses to weak local capacity, but viable alternatives have still to be identified and tried. In general, the problem of improving capacities has been recognized, but approaches to its resolution are not far enough along to be evaluated. Additional innovation and experimentation is required.

**Box 3. AGETIPs: Improving project implementation through the private sector**

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AGETIP (*L'Agence d'exécution de travaux d'intérêt public contre le sous-emploi*) is a private, not-for-profit company operating in Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Its mission is to undertake “general contracting” of urban infrastructure works for municipalities, ministries and other entities. AGETIP hires consultants to prepare technical and bidding documents, issues calls for bids, evaluates and adjudicates bids, and contracts work. Its own staff of engineers and consultants supervises work, evaluates progress and makes payments to contractors.

What has AGETIP achieved? The effective privatization of contract management has led to rapid project execution, especially when compared to existing projects. In many cases there is real competition and transparency in procurement for the first time. Bid evaluation rules are set out in the agencies' procedures manual, and procurement is completed in weeks, not months or years. AGETIPs are subject to quarterly audits for the first six months and twice-yearly audits thereafter. Audits are carried out by independent external auditors. Payments are made in record time—less than ten days in Senegal and an average of two and one half days in Burkina Faso. Finally, projects are executed more efficiently (buildings are coming in at about half the price!) and ministries are freed to concentrate on their primary functions without being distracted by construction problems.

Why has AGETIP been so successful? First of all, it brings private sector management expertise and practices to public civil works contracting. Second, it contracts with firms, and hence with labor, on an “as needed” basis, avoiding the bloated systems of public agencies. Third, and perhaps most important, its private legal status allows it to bypass the extremely cumbersome contracting and payment procedures mandated by the public sector. It is crucial to note, however, that it is able to do so while maintaining a higher standard of rigor and discipline than is typically found in public agencies.

What have been the spin-off benefits of AGETIP? First, project implementation is achieved. Second, the approach stimulates the local domestic private sector—no expatriate consultants or contractors have participated in any phase of the AGETIP operation. Third, there are important non-quantifiable effects: the workers tend to spend their wages close to home, providing important multiplier effects in what is a severely depressed economy; and the very success of AGETIP acts as a spur to other agencies to improve their performance.

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## Ownership as a concept central to implementation

36. For «ownership» of a project or program to exist, the key participants in the program must feel responsibility for the success or failure of the enterprise. Such responsibility is bred by authority and control of the means to make the project happen. It also carries with it the freedom to make mistakes. This sense of authority can be developed by such steps as involving interest groups in the preparation of a project (including NGOs), assigning responsible tasks to them and respecting their results, and providing them with resources for sector and design work and letting them get on with implementation after funding is available. All of these actions require letting go by those in power, and they involve some risk that the new «owners» will not do the right thing. Even though the commitments freely given to a project do not themselves guarantee successful implementation, the need for donors and governments to seek them is important, despite the risks involved.

37. Some work has been done on defining and trying out ways to foster ownership among interest groups within a country. Ownership begins with participation in the design of assistance strategies and programs by constituencies affected by the program, including administrators, teachers, students, communities and parents. Their input improves design effectiveness, increases accountability and reduces the risk that controversial policies will be derailed by opposition. But engaging such constituencies in the process is often difficult and time-consuming and requires resources and a strong will among both donors and recipient. Primary responsibility for fostering broad participation and ownership rests with the country, but donors and in-country NGOs can encourage governments to promote ownership during project preparation and implementation. The preparation of a national consensus and strategy on education development is an ideal objective for a process that builds ownership, as the Mauritius National Plan has demonstrated.

38. Many other African countries already have rich experience in beneficiary-driven project design and implementation, particularly as regards small-scale NGO activities. On a larger scale, the Kenyan government and the World Bank recently engaged the Kenya national *jua kali* (informal sector) federation and branch associations to design and implement an informal sector training and technology project. In Zambia, a social investment fund (financed by the Zambian Government, IDA, European Community, and Norwegian Government) promotes ownership by providing joint financing for community-initiated and community-implemented sub-projects to expand the social service



### *Governments' and donors' capacity*

infrastructure. In Mozambique, university staff took the lead in designing their own strategic development program and seeking out donor support. As a result, consensus and commitment were built within the university on the need for reform and the type of reforms to be undertaken (*see Box 4*). In Chad and Mali, beneficiary assessments and participatory planning methods are being used to help design projects and to promote a sense of ownership.

39. Examples of efforts to improve the dialogue between donors and governments are harder to find. Donors' desire to increase the probability of project success by maintaining a high degree of technical control over design and implementation and their desire to make sure that timetables are met, have, over time in Africa, discouraged governments from controlling projects within their own cultural context and technical capabilities. This desire is explained by the donors' representatives as their superiors looking for good technical results produced on time. Questions of capacity-building, sustainability and ownership have historically taken second place to technical success. That these «softer» concepts are now central to the donors' discussions on development assistance is an indication that a new paradigm for assistance may be emerging, a shift noted and appreciated by the ministers of education at the DAE Task Force meeting. The practical implications of this shift in thinking remain to be developed, but examples of it have begun to accumulate. For example, in Senegal and Mali, the World Bank and other donors participated in very successful and informative *Journées de Réflexion* with host governments. These meetings were designed specifically to foster frank and open debate on policy options and issues for the countries' long-term development, and during most of the time the donors simply listened. Also, as another example in which the government, interest groups and donors participated to the country's benefit, the Kenyan government recently completed a Sessional Paper on education based on substantial consultation within the Ministry of Education, the university system and the public at large. The ideas gathered and the consensus achieved through this process helped to form the basis for an Education Sector Adjustment program supported by donors.

## *Issues in implementation*

### **Box 4. Ownership of reforms: The experience of Eduardo Mondlane University**

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The staff of Eduardo Mondlane University have a clear appreciation and commitment to a reform program designed to make the university more efficient and responsive to the needs of Mozambique because they designed the program themselves.

In mid-1990 the Rector invited a group of fifteen senior university staff to participate in a series of brain-storming sessions intended to explore strategies for institutional stabilization and development. This group included faculty deans, department heads, senior professors, the Registrar, the head of the planning office, and the chief accountant. After three sessions, a smaller working group of six persons was appointed to summarize the outcome of these discussions and prepare an agenda for further deliberation.

During a two month period, the document was reviewed by each academic department. This process produced twenty-seven written reactions by constituent groups within the university, which were used to revise the draft document. This second draft was then shared with and discussed by members of the university council and the university research committee. The result was an initial draft of the *Present and Perspectives* plan.

The draft plan was used as a basis of intensive consultations with government representatives, particularly the ministers of planning, finance, and education. This was to ensure that the principal proposals of the plan were understood and accepted by government. Key points included the overall financial implications of the plan, and the concept of greater university autonomy.

The strategic plan was publicly presented to representatives of government, donors, and the private sector during a Consultative Meeting in May 1991. It contained a quantitative and qualitative analysis of university shortcomings in staff development and retention, student performance, and research. Government was asked to delegate greater management flexibility to the university in return for increased accountability. Donors were requested to consider more flexible, longer-term institutional support structured around the strategy objectives. The private sector was encouraged to fund scholarships for needy students. UEM staff made presentations on these key topics and then responded to questions during public discussion.

The outcome of this process was a coherent strategy for institutional stabilization and revitalization, and a considerable consensus among UEM staff, government leaders, and donor representatives that this was a worthwhile approach.

From: N. Matos. *Eduardo Mondlane University: An experience in*

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*Ownership as a concept central to implementation*

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*university reform.* Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1993.

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40. While it is easy to recognize the value of people feeling responsibility for the success of a project or program, it must be recognized that ownership is not easy to achieve. Its achievement requires a number of conditions to be met: donor groups that collectively respect governments' responsibilities for the actions undertaken to improve education; donors that view externally funded projects as part of a beneficiary country's program and not the donors' program; a high-level political commitment to be inclusive in choosing who participates in policy dialogues (Uganda's current leadership is an example); a willingness among staff of the ministry of education and in schools to listen to others; local technical knowledge of the problems to be solved; resources to support fora for participation; and time for participation to breed ownership. In any country, the development of these conditions is a time-consuming process which, if achieved, would accomplish what some participants at Angers called "genuine partnership."

## **The influence of financing on implementation**

41. Investments in educational development in Africa lead to sustainable reforms when domestic financing, both public and private, is complemented by external funding. Above, three types of donor assistance were described from the perspective of how they define project and program design. The form that external financing takes also influences the management and administration of funds, including considerations of the governments' financial contributions, the disbursements of the external funds, and procedures for procurement. How each of these financial elements in a project or program is handled can have a significant influence on implementation.

### **Government financing**

42. A key element of financing is the provision of adequate recurrent costs. Weaknesses in financing the recurrent costs associated with project or program implementation put in jeopardy the returns on large amounts of both previous and new capital investment. The problem is critical in the human resources sectors in Africa (especially for primary education), where recurrent expenditure requirements are high in relation to capital expenditures. Moreover, inputs that are normally funded from recurrent budgets are among the most important for learning: a professional and motivated staff, books, materials, and equipment. Salary policies and practices are a key lever for managing incentive structures necessary to reap maximum benefit from staff. Skirting around the issue of inadequate recurrent cost financing avoids confronting the crucial resource allocation and investment decisions in the sector. A new Donors to African Education Working Group on the Financing of Education, led by the Canadian International Development Agency, will look at the costs and financing of education, including recurrent financing.

43. The frequent inability of governments to provide counterpart funding for recurrent costs and the lack of donor attention to this issue must be seen as failures. Ways must be found to ensure government ability to follow up on agreements to provide counterpart funds, to safeguard salaries, to provide for maintenance and to supply learning materials. One idea proposed at Angers is to have the private sector in a country help finance fellowships, short courses, and recurrent (teacher incentives) and capital expenditures. In the long run,

### *Ownership as a concept central to implementation*

only improved macro-economic management and stronger public finance controls can resolve the counterpart funding problem. If the country is unable to meet its obligations, then there is a need for government and donors to work together to evaluate and restructure the program, rather than just slowing or halting disbursement, as has happened in Cameroon (*see Box 5*). When appropriate in adjusting economies, alternative financing—such as grant or loan facilities—may be used to cover what is normally considered counterpart contributions until the economy recovers to the extent that it can resume self-financing of critical inputs (*see Box 6*).

#### **Box 5. Restructuring education projects to meet new realities: Cameroon's Education and Vocational Training Project**

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The Cameroon Education and Vocational Training Project was recently scaled down and refocused to meet changing economic realities and changing patterns of educational demand.

The restructuring cut project costs from US\$ 75 million to US\$ 36.2 million, and proposes further reductions to US\$ 18 million. A major component, construction of new Primary Teacher Training Colleges, was no longer necessary, as the civil service was no longer expanding. Construction was replaced by assistance to review and redefine education policies and strategies, financing of a primary teacher training program, and rehabilitation of post-primary vocational training centers. The proposed further restructuring calls for major project management improvements, scaling down of activities and elimination of a project component dealing with adult vocational training. This component was made inviable because of the inability of the Government to provide necessary operating resources, and the much reduced demand for training by public and private enterprises.

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44. In countries where the resource base is not expected to improve significantly in the medium term, donors may have to consider financing of teacher salaries, supervisors' transport costs, books and materials. Such a shift in policy presents a challenge to the “rule of the game” that donors provide only foreign exchange for investment in expanding and improving the productive capacity of borrowing or recipient countries. Given the economic situation of many sub-Saharan African countries and the special characteristics of the education sector—where the recurrent cost implications of capital investment in educational infrastructure are high—the basic paradigm that donors provide foreign capital for investment and that beneficiary countries meet both the local investment costs and all operating costs appears unrealistic. To date, only rarely have donors financed local currency operational or recurrent costs, but in many countries such restrictions are incompatible with current well-founded human resource development strategies given foreseeable macro-economic conditions.

**Box 6. Counterpart funding and project sustainability:  
The Uganda Primary Education and Teacher Development Project**

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The Government of Uganda has been experiencing difficulties in making counterpart funding available to externally-assisted projects. This is a macro problem, arising from the low government revenues. The introduction of new revenue raising measures, and expected improvements in tax administration under the recently established Uganda Revenue Authority should help to increase government revenue from 6.6 per cent of GDP in 1991/92 to 11.6 per cent of GDP in 1994/95, more than doubling in real terms. In addition, the government and the World Bank are undertaking public expenditure reviews with a view toward rationalizing the country's project portfolio.

These measures should help to ensure adequate availability of counterpart funds in the near future. In the meantime, parallel financing agreements have been reached between the government, IDA and USAID in which IDA finances specific investments and attendant policy reforms and USAID disburses funds through a mix of direct project investments and "non-project" support. USAID's non-project support actually finances the government's counterpart contribution to the project of US\$ 25 million for provision of learning materials.

Long-term sustainability of project investments depends on developments both inside and outside the education sector. Outside the sector, it is expected that appropriate financial and structural policies will facilitate lower inflation and increased savings and investment, enabling GDP growth to be sustained at 5 per cent annually over the long term. A larger revenue base, combined with declining military spending will allow government social sector expenditures to increase. Within the education sector, greater cost recovery at the secondary and tertiary levels will enable a substantially greater share of the education budget to be devoted to primary education.

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## **Counterpart staff and technical advisors**

45. Most donor agencies expect governments to provide counterpart staff to work with technical advisors and to provide government financing, particularly for the recurrent costs associated with the activities that receive donor financing. The expectation of these government inputs has created problems. The provision of counterpart staff has often failed in its mission because the counterparts provided are underqualified—if at all available—or because technical advisors do not involve and support them. When this happens, the technical assistance becomes a means of filling skill gaps rather than building scarce capacity. It is tempting for both governments and donors to overlook the institutional development part of the technical assistance and to focus simply on the need to provide a substitute for the missing local skills. Furthermore, investments have not been used effectively when the macro-economic environment has prevented funds from being provided to sustain salaries, transport, maintenance and materials. Solutions to these problems are starting to emerge: an emphasis on skills transfer, increased use of local consultants (strongly supported by the African ministers of education), donor support for recurrent costs, and government commitments to address crucial long-term cost and finance issues.

46. Because of the problems associated with technical assistance, African governments have often taken an ambivalent attitude toward it. Many perceive it at best as a free good (when it is grant-funded), and at worst as something imposed by donors (especially when it is paid for from a loan). In the hurry to produce short-term results, technical assistance is not used to build local skills by assigning counterparts who have potential for growth to work with advisors, nor is time or effort expended on appropriate training. On the donors' part, their need for demonstrable results quickly should not eliminate attention to the longer-term needs for local capacity building and ownership of reforms, recognizing the possible short-term costs of poorer and slower implementation.

Both governments and donors can rely more on Africans' involvement to ensure that skills are transferred to Africans when foreign expertise is used.

## **Procurement and disbursement**

47. Donors are investing large amounts of money in education in sub-Saharan Africa, and they want to be sure that their investments are well-spent. Given weaknesses in management and administrative skills and the disincentives for local officials to ensure that monies are used for their intended purposes, strict and complicated procedures for procurement and disbursement have been instituted by donors. Often, to avoid delays in the beneficiary's normal payment procedures, external funds are used to make direct payments to suppliers, or are disbursed through special accounts. Such procedures, while speeding up disbursements, often have a counterproductive effect on the sustainability of projects as they tend to weaken the internalization of projects in the government's program. Sometimes overly complicated donor

### *Issues in implementation*

requirements, unfamiliarity and misunderstandings with these procedures locally, incompatible procedures between government and donor systems and among donors, slow processing of documentation, and local control conflicts have produced repeated and significant delays in project implementation in many countries. This causes three basic problems. First, valuable management resources are spent on resolving procedural and bureaucratic issues rather than core sectoral problems related to delivery of quality educational services. Second, delays negatively affect suppliers and ultimately drive up the cost of doing business, as the cost of such delays is eventually reflected in tender prices. Slow contracting and payment procedures can be devastating for small scale suppliers or for suppliers in high-inflation environments. Third, delays also negatively affect motivation of field staff charged with implementing the program or project and of beneficiaries expected to participate.

48. Donors could contribute to resolving the problems of procurement and disbursement by agreeing on a uniform set of procurement and disbursement regulations. The kinds of changes called for during the DAE Task Force meeting included (a) donors adapting to the rhythm and uniqueness of country planning processes; (b) more flexible reprogramming when appropriate; (c) longer-term financing mechanisms; (d) simpler procurement policies that also eliminate obstacles for local firms; and (e) revisions in local laws and regulations so that local firms can be more competitive in bidding for contracts.

These changes would help, especially bearing in mind that many donors are moving from the funding of specific projects to the funding of sectoral programs or of operations that will be implemented in a decentralized environment where local officials have little experience with international procurement procedures. However, the processing and reporting requirements among different agencies and among different governments make uniform rules of the game and procedures difficult to achieve. Where full agreement is not possible, governments and donors can help bridge the gaps between foreign and country procedures by providing procurement handbooks and offering training. For example, the development banks have standard documents available for the procurement of most goods, works and consultant services, and the World Bank has recently strengthened its in-country support for seminars on procurement and auditing guidelines.

49. Most existing procurement and disbursement guidelines are designed for centralized administrations. Changes in project implementation strategies create pressure for change in procedures for procurement and disbursement. Program funding that provides for the devolution of spending authority to local and school levels works against the desire of both governments and donors to keep procurement, auditing and accounting procedures simple. As the expenditures to be monitored multiply, oversight becomes more difficult. Governments and agencies are thus faced with the dilemma of trying to improve implementation of programs by simplifying bureaucratic procedures for procurement and disbursement, while at the same time passing authority and responsibility for implementation to smaller and smaller units in the education



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system. No effective answers to this dilemma have yet been found.

## Monitoring and reporting

50. An ideal monitoring and reporting system serves two important functions. It should provide management with an early warning of implementation problems so that they can be addressed before reaching a critical stage, and it ensures that funds are being used as planned. Unfortunately, most monitoring and reporting of donor-supported activities focus more narrowly on the auditing and accounting function. In fact, too much donor agency, technical assistance and local staff energy is focused on «policing» projects to ensure that covenants, contract arrangements, and financial regulations are fulfilled, and little time is spent ascertaining if a project is having an impact. In the World Bank, for example, supervision is supposed to focus on verifying that covenants have been met and that resources have been properly used, and this accounts for a high proportion of staff field time. Few education projects and programs have well-functioning systems for monitoring implementation at the school level, and almost none to date has included the serious involvement of interest groups that would increase the transparency of how funds are being used and the measurement of what impact is occurring. The reporting requirements that do exist, both on disbursements and on field implementation, are often duplicated across donor agencies and lack focus because outcome indicators do not exist and narrative descriptions of what is actually happening are few.

51. While it can be said that, in general, monitoring and reporting systems are not providing the support to implementation that they should, there are signs that the issue has been recognized, if not resolved. First, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), USAID, the World Bank and other agencies have been working on defining indicators that can be used to monitor project implementation and impact (see “Primary Education in Lesotho: Indicators.” Paris: IIEP, 1992; T. Hartnett and W. Heneveld, *Statistical Indicators of Female Participation in Education in sub-Saharan Africa*, AFTHR Technical Note No. 7. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1993; R. Horn, «The Fundamental Quality Level Indicator System for Primary Schools.» Washington D.C.: USAID, 1992). Second, with support from the Donors to African Education Working Group on Statistics, the NESIS project in UNESCO's Division of Statistics is working with over a dozen countries on strengthening their statistical information systems. However, these regional

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initiatives need to be translated into country-level applications that inform the monitoring of investments for the reform of education.

52. Another development that holds promise for improving the monitoring and reporting on implementation is the «fourth generation» evaluation methodology developed by Guba and Lincoln (see E. Guba and Y. Lincoln, *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, 1989, and USAID, *A.I.D. Evaluation News*, No. 2, 1991). This participatory methodology, which has already been tried out in evaluating USAID projects on human resource development in Malawi and on a bursaries scheme in South Africa, defines a 12-step process that allows interest groups to «jointly construct a project reality and negotiate solutions to project issues» with the assigned evaluator. As it hopefully becomes more common for interest groups to participate directly in project implementation, this methodology may provide a guide as to how to involve more than donors and government representatives in the monitoring and reporting process.

53. Interestingly, monitoring and reporting was not an issue that received much attention in discussions at the DAE Task Force meeting.

## Recommendations and conclusion

54. Participants in the Angers meeting confirmed and extended the issues raised in this paper. Their highest priority concerns include: achieving economic and political preconditions for effective implementation; defining goals for the education system with broad participation; making project and program design simpler, more long-term, and more responsive to locally-defined problems; improving the capacity of governments and donors to manage educational development; increasing ownership of projects and programs; and making processes for donor financing of education more flexible. The 1993 DAE Task Force meeting demonstrated that there is a broad consensus among governments and donors on these issues, even though differences of opinion exist on priorities and on details of changes that need to be made.

55. There also appears to be agreement on many measures that will address these issues. Discussion groups at Angers noted the need to depoliticize education administration and to improve budgetary management. They called for increased participation by beneficiaries in project preparation and less agenda-setting control by donors in order to make projects more relevant to local needs and to provide a sense of ownership. The discussion groups and the ministers of education called on governments to develop long-term sector development plans and on donors to coordinate support for such plans through real partnerships with governments. These changes necessarily imply a shift from project to program financing, a process already under way and largely confirmed at the Task Force meeting. Finally, discussion groups emphasized the need to build and retain local capacity for sustained educational progress, though practical suggestions on how to do this (other than reducing traditional forms of technical assistance) are elusive.

56. The main challenge remains how to implement specific recommendations arising from this paper and from the rich discussions at the conference. Many recommendations mentioned in Angers involve action beyond the control of ministries of education or individual donors, such as strengthening the economy to improve both the resource base and the demand for education and implementing civil service reforms that will improve public sector efficiency and the motivation and retention of staff.

## *Recommendations and conclusion*

57. The implementation of other recommendations will require the resolution of complex «second order» problems. For example, both donors and governments recognize the need to simplify conditionalities attached to funding. This, however, must be addressed within the context of maintaining accountability to their respective constituents (parliaments in donor countries and beneficiaries in recipient countries). Similarly, the success of increased training for skill transfer through technical assistance requires changes in public service incentive and reward systems and in the way personnel are used. Finally, increased private sector involvement in education can only be realized once the state has clearly defined its own role and its responsibilities in the provision of social services.

58. Participants also noted that the diversity of conditions in Africa, the uncertainty of policy outcomes, and the complexity of educational problems require a strategy of experimentation in educational delivery. For experimentation to be successful and to go to scale, there must be a long-term commitment by both donors and government and a commitment to learning from experience. Most importantly, as one of the main speakers noted, it requires recognition of the educational crisis and a commitment to action. Actionable recommendations to improve implementation that participants agreed upon include:

- ? Governments should devise long-term education sector development strategies based on input from beneficiaries (including families, communities, and businesses), implementors (teachers, school heads, and managers), and financiers (private, government, and donors).
- ? Donors should improve coordination through development of long-term sector strategies that respond to the pattern of national sector strategies in sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizing improved «aid management» by ministries.
- ? Donors should help governments build budgeting, financial management, and implementation capacity within ministries through regional training programs, staff secondments, more local consultants, and better human resource management.

### *Issues in implementation*

- ? Donors should continue their shift from project to program financing in line with each country's management capacities, thereby recognizing the long-term nature of educational development and the significant local and recurrent costs associated with such development, particularly at the basic education level.
- ? Donors should standardize and simplify procurement and disbursement procedures so as to reduce the administrative burden on implementing agencies, increase project or program efficiency, provide greater transparency and accountability, and increase opportunities for local contractors to bid on donor-funded contracts; and governments should also change their internal processes to make procurement and disbursement more efficient and effective.
- ? Governments should develop mechanisms for experimentation and innovation in educational management and delivery, and donors should encourage experimentation in their funding;
- ? Governments should provide an enabling environment for donor financing, so that specialized NGOs will participate in the education sector.
- ? Governments and donors together should make technical assistance a true capacity-building opportunity by using more local consultants, by providing qualified counterparts (on both sides), by fostering long-term "coaching" relationships, and by emphasizing skills transfer.

59. Differences of opinion on the issues and these recommendations were often apparent at the DAE Task Force meeting, but the overall content and tone of the meeting were more open than previous exchanges between donors and ministers of education. As H.E. Mr. Parsuramen, the Minister of Education for Mauritius, concluded in reporting on the Ministers' closed session in Angers, "when we look back on the experience that we had when dealing with donors, there has been a changed attitude and this is what we would like to encourage further."