**Experts' Meeting
on Improving Performance
in Primary Education**

9 to 13 July 2001, Dakar, Senegal

Improving Performance
in Primary Education
A Challenge to the Goals
of Education for All

*Ensuring that by 2015
all children, particularly girls,
children in difficult circumstances
and those belonging
to ethnic minorities, have access
to, and complete, free and
compulsory primary education
of good quality.*

Dakar, 2001

UNESCO

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Acknowledgements

I T has often been said that there is nothing new under the sun. This document highlights what we know that we should do, but have not done.

The staff of the Primary Education Section is indebted to all those who contributed to the organization and success of the meeting. It was the willingness to share information that gave participants a sense of togetherness in exploring options for improving primary education.

We are idebted to our partners, in particular, ISESCO and The World Bank for their contribution. Special thanks are due to the many presenters whose accumulated wisdom and experience are contained in the document.

It was a genuine pleasure to work with Helen Sayers, Carmela Salzano and John Allen who transformed papers and presentations into a readable document. The staff of the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar contributed as well as they could to ensure the smooth running of the meeting.

Our sincere thanks to the many participants, some of whom travelled for days to attend the meeting. Without them, it would not have been possible.

Above all, our greatest depth of gratitude is to those who have taken the experience of the meeting to their respective countries and who, through their own efforts, have made strides in improving the quality of primary education.

Winsome Gordon
Chief,
Primary Education Section
Basic Education Division

We are the same

White we are, white we are, white we are
    But we are the same
Black we are, black we are, black we are
    But we are the same
Yellow we are, yellow we are, yellow we are
    But we are the same
Red we are, red we are, red we are
    But we are the same
We differ in religion, we differ in religion, we differ in religion
    But we are the same
We are the same, we are the same, we are the same

Egyptian participants

Foreword

IT is imperative that primary education should remain high on the global agenda for education. Its importance for social and economic development makes it a basic right for every child, without discrimination. A right to primary education, however, is nothing if there is no access to it. Moreover, when there is access to it, if the education provided is of poor quality, then it is unlikely that the goal of education for all will be reached. For these reasons the global community continues its search for ways in which access to good quality primary education can be provided universally.

In all countries there are some children who learn, and progress, through the formal education system. They are usually from the more affluent sectors of society, while less fortunate children remain out of school, drop out, or attend irregularly. Therefore, emphasis on the needs of the poorest children should be the priority for improving access to, and improving the quality of, primary education.

The time is ripe. One of the six goals of education for all declared at the meeting in Dakar, Senegal, in 2002, is: 'Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory education of good quality.' The commitment to education for all stated further that no country with a credible plan should be deprived of the resources needed to implement it. Primary education is a priority of The Millennium Development Goals; and the Fast Track Initiative seeks to accelerate the implementation of plans and strategies which lead to 100 per cent completion of good quality primary education, and equity in its provision, by the year 2015. There is also a growing acceptance that the education of children begins at birth, and long before they enter primary school, and this period of their lives must prepare them for their subsequent formal education, and progress through school.

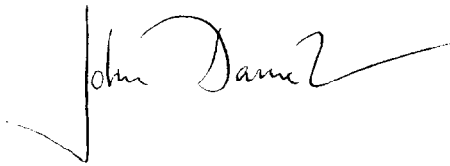There is no shortage of information on what inputs and processes are needed to provide good quality primary education. Yet finding the best ways of providing it has eluded many governments. Many of the right policies are generally in place. There have been successful innovations, and widespread training programmes for educational personnel have been held, but for a number of reasons countries have then

been unable to sustain them. The situation is further aggravated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the growing number of displaced persons.

As a follow-up to the Education for All Forum, UNESCO jointly with ISESCO, organized a meeting of Directors of Primary Education Departments from 31 countries, which other stakeholders also attended. The objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for the Directors to discuss these challenges, share approaches, and offer choices that could help them to meet the goal of providing education for all children, taking into account that close to 100 million children are still out of school. The meeting focused on the curriculum, the learning environment, governance, and the assessment and evaluation of primary education.

This document presents the findings of that meeting. UNESCO and ISESCO will distribute it in the hope that it will be useful, both for those who contributed to its preparation, and to others who were unable to attend. UNESCO has already established a network to enable the participants to continue to benefit from the sharing of ideas. It is not enough to set up the network, its value is in the use that will be made of it.

I take this opportunity to call on all those involved in the planning and delivery of primary education, to concentrate on, and accelerate, their efforts to achieve education for all children, and give them the foundation on which to improve their living standards, and ensure their subsequent progress throughout life.

John Daniel
Assistant Director-General for Education
UNESCO

Introduction

THE focus of the Expert Meeting on Improving the Performance of Primary Education, convened during the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, from 9 to 13 July 2001 was: *"How to improve quality and performance in primary education to meet the fundamental goal of lifelong learning for all through sustainable measures."*

With this aim in mind, and in order to promote good quality universal primary education as a human right, UNESCO/BREDA, in collaboration with ISESCO, brought together educators and educational specialists from all over the world, to review the challenges, and identify strategies, that will lead to improving the performance of primary education.

During the meeting, 55 educators and representatives from international agencies, universities and NGOs, representing 31 countries, met to exchange information, discuss experiences and recommend various options, by which all stakeholders can take action to improve performance in primary education. Strategies and options were identified, together with the steps and processes of change that are needed in the various dimensions of the primary education sub-system, in order to progress towards the goal of improving performance and, ultimately, provide learning that is more meaningful for children.

As was to be expected, there is no blueprint for achieving Education for All. Each country will need to work within its own cultural, social, political and economic realities. Nonetheless, there are common areas to be addressed, and steps to be undertaken in moving towards EFA. The four themes chosen for emphasis at the meeting are among those that have challenged the foundations of primary education:

◆ Improving the pedagogy of teachers - focusing on the adaptation of the curriculum at the classroom level.
◆ Local governance: strategies and options
◆ Care and education for all children: the school as a supportive environment.
◆ Monitoring progress and evaluation in primary education performance in efforts to achieve Education for All.

Setting the Context: Global Challenges for Primary Education

ONE of the most important findings of the EFA 2000 Assessment, that preceded the World Conference on Education for All held in Dakar in April 2000, was that the performance of primary education fell below desired levels. Many gains in primary education had diminished, due to national and international conflicts, natural disasters, and extreme poverty. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is seriously affecting education systems today, and will continue to have a negative impact in the future. Thousands of teachers, educational personnel and students, have died or been destabilized by AIDS, by malaria, and other chronic diseases.

Added to these external problems, the education system itself has faced persistent

challenges. Classes continue to be too large, there is a constant lack of educational materials, teachers are not appropriately trained, schools are poorly supervised, and many children are still being taught in environments that discourage learning. Over 100 million children still have no access to schooling. Those hit hardest by these problems are the most vulnerable groups, and those in poor and remote areas. All these factors have resulted in primary education performance falling below expectations.

Political and socio-economic instability continues to be an inescapable reality in many countries. Recognizing that these conditions will not disappear overnight, education systems need consciously to plan for them. Essentially, they need to place emphasis on creating opportunities for all children to achieve in their learning environment, whatever the situation. It is a clear waste of resources if children, in the end, do not learn, and so do not acquire the skills they need to secure their social and economic well-being. Education must strive to attain the best results if it is to become a true engine for social transformation, enabling each individual to realize his or her full potential, and live in dignity.

Ten years after the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All held in March 1990, the World Education Forum set global targets for education, and gave the international community 15 years within which to achieve them. In the move towards achieving EFA, the Dakar Framework for Action called for greater emphasis on participatory approaches, a more efficient use of resources, and more transparency and accountability in the management of education. Education should strive to achieve equity, and assist poor people to realize their own potential, so that they can be empowered to lift themselves out of abject poverty.

Meeting the Challenges

P RIMARY education is the level of formal education through which most of the population passes. At the time of the World Forum on Education for All, educational statistics showed pupil enrolment worldwide to be about 680 million, supported by approximately 28 million schoolteachers. High dropout and repetition rates contribute to high wastage in some regions and countries. Failure to achieve permanent literacy during the school years is contributing to illiteracy rates in adult society. Nonetheless, if countries take the follow-up to Dakar seriously, by the end of 2015 schools would have provided one billion literate adults.

> *We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.*
>
> *Franklin Roosevelt,*
> *US President,*
> *a founder of the United Nations*

Teachers at the core of EFA

T EACHERS are at the heart of any strategy to improve the performance of primary education. However, it is essential that they receive support from all levels of the education system, and from society as a whole. Their commitment, competence and creativity continue to be central to the success of children, and thus their conditions of service, their preparation and continuing support are fundamental for the achievement of the goals of Education for All.

The primary education curriculum

A TTENTION should be paid to developing a meaningful curriculum, ensuring the presence of an enabling learning environment, of support systems and governance of education, with special emphasis on the evaluation of primary education performance as a tool for improving the quality of education.

In most countries the primary education curriculum is centrally developed. It ranges from full development at the central level, to a core curriculum that is modified at other levels of administration. At the primary level, most curricula cover similar areas, principally because the fundamental concepts on which further learning is built are generally the same. However, it has become increasingly evident that the curriculum must respond more directly to the needs of the learners, and should be adapted accordingly. This calls for a thorough understanding of the learning environment and its requirements, as well as the requirements of the education system itself. Although the curriculum should be meaningful to the children's immediate environment, it must also provide opportunities to open up wider horizons for them.

An enabling environment for learning

A LL children can, and will, learn. However, an appropriate level of inputs, including personnel, materials and facilities, must accompany the learning process. In many developing countries, hardly any financial resources remain to provide learning materials after teachers' salaries have been paid. Although the problem has been acknowledged, little has been done to address it, and so children's performance has been hampered because of the paucity of the learning environment. This situation has its greatest negative effects on children who are above or below the class average, or who need special attention. The solution to this problem depends to a great extent on teachers, head teachers, and their working relationships with their communities.

At the level of the overall system, UNICEF is supporting child-friendly schools, the World Bank promotes school-based management, while UNESCO encourages the use of the environment as a source of teaching and learning aids. Technological advances will also open new avenues for improving the learning environment. Beyond these are a number of programmes which have not received mass implementation, but may hold the key for sustained access, retention, and performance in primary education.

Support systems

P RIMARY education is more than cognitive learning. However, increasing levels of competition in societies, and an over-emphasis on examinations, have resulted in a tendency to ignore the psychosocial dimensions of education. Thus values, attitudes, social and emotional problems, career concerns, and security at school, are often not adequately addressed, although they have a direct effect on performance in education. Guidance and counselling services, and effective supervision of the system are urgent needs, if children are to be able to exercise their right to education. Furthermore, parental cooperation and support enhances children's learning and their overall achievement.

Governance in primary education

F OR many years there has been general acceptance that giving parents and community members a stronger voice in school management, can strengthen schools' accountability to communities, increase teacher and student attendance, improve the efficiency of resource use, mobilize increased community support for schools, and improve student learning. Global experience shows that community involvement in school governance can be a positive force for school improvements, even where parents are illiterate. However, in many countries, political and technical obstacles block such decentralization of resources and decision-making by school level councils. In those cases where school-based management is introduced, it is most important that the education system continues to play key equity-promotion and pedagogical quality assurance roles centrally. Effective capacity

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building for school council members, and clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of all parties, are also essential. Strategies for introducing school-based management reforms, and maximizing their benefits towards the goals of EFA, are an important area for consideration.

Assessment and evaluation

THE Dakar Commitment stresses that the promotion of quality education is integrally linked to educational outcomes and learner performance. The role of measurement is basically recognized as a tool to ensure that the aims set for education are achieved, and scarce resources are allocated efficiently. As already stated, the education system must serve all learners and, in so doing, adopt a flexible approach, offering alternative channels, and promoting the active participation of communities, parents, and other members of civil society, in its planning, programming, delivery and evaluation.

Education must respond to the different learning needs of children, and promote a balanced and holistic development of their personalities. This is particularly significant in an era of globalization and technological 'enthusiasm', purported by educators to be important contributors to humanistic ends in education. The challenge is to provide the up and coming generation with the awareness, abilities and mental strength it needs to take responsibility for its lives, and make a contribution to society. This challenge is fundamental to meaningful development.

Organization of the Meeting

THE Meeting consisted of plenary sessions, where national and international experiences were shared, and round-table discussions and working group sessions were held, where participants discussed strategies, processes and options on the four themes of the meeting.

The four themes and facilitators of working groups were:

1. Improving the pedagogy of teachers – focusing on the adaptation of the curriculum at the classroom level.
   Facilitated by Dr Angela Little, Institute of Education, University of London.
2. Local governance – strategies and options
   Facilitated by Professor K. Sujatha, the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, India; Ms Barbara Bruns, The World Bank; and Mr. German Trevino
3. Care and education for all children – the school as a supportive environment
   Facilitated by Mr. Jamie Wickens, World Food Programme
4. Monitoring progress and evaluation in primary education performance in efforts to achieve Education for All
   Facilitated by Mr. Momodou Jeng, Acting Director of Standards and Quality Assurance, Gambia

THE meeting recognized the many successful pilot experiences in the selected areas, but was concerned mainly with bringing such experiences "to scale". The working groups were requested to take into consideration the situation of girls in the proposed options and processes, and to give special attention to affordability and national capabilities. Experts in their fields facilitated the group discussions.

PARTICIPANTS visited the Institut National d'Etude et d'Action pour le Développement de l'Education (INEADE) in Dakar, to discuss with them their role and function in the education process in Senegal. The staff presented the activities of the Institute, and participants had an opportunity to ask questions. It is interesting to note that the results of research undertaken by the Institute on the education system have been taken into consideration in the national education project/programme funded by The World Bank. They are now grappling with challenges concerning the management of the shift system, the safe delivery of school books, the in-service training of teachers, and ways of improving learning, and the overall efficiency of the school system.

ON the final day, the groups presented their reports to the plenary session and strategies and priorities for follow-up action were discussed.

Education for All 2000 -
the Scoreboard for Africa
(from a UNESCO report)

■ *At least 17 million more primary school-age African children are in school today compared with 1990. However, some 42 million children in sub-Saharan Africa are still out of school.*

■ *Only ten African countries are on track to achieve the education goals they set after The World Conference on Education for All, in 1990.*

■ *Almost 60 per cent of out-of-school children are girls, illustrating that the gender gap is as wide as it was a decade ago.*

■ *Up to two-thirds of children are not receiving an education in countries where there is armed conflict and civil strife.*

■ *The average number of pupils per teacher is thirty-seven in the region; in central and western African countries, such as Mali or Chad, it can be as high as seventy. The pupil/teacher ratio has risen slightly in the past decade.*

■ *Almost 40 per cent of African adults cannot read or write. Women are the most affected. In certain countries in western Africa, female illiteracy can reach 80 per cent.*

Chapter One

Improving the pedagogy of teachers – focusing on the adaptation of the curriculum at the classroom level

THE content and structure of the curriculum are important aspects of the teaching and learning process, yet, ultimately, learning outcomes depend largely on how the teacher interprets the curriculum. In many countries, curriculum development is a centralized activity. However, the global objective of making the education system more participatory has led to changes in the curriculum decision-making process. Some countries define 70 to 80 per cent of the core curriculum nationally, and allow the regions and provinces to add the remaining elements according to their needs. India offers a national curriculum guideline from which the individual states prepare their own curriculum. The ultimate goal is that the curriculum should be meaningful to all learners, so that it fits their social, cultural and environmental context. This requires that primary school teachers, in particular, are actively involved in curriculum development, and that the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to permit adaptation at the local level.

In reality the primary education curriculum is often developed with limited inputs from the teachers, and sometimes with equally limited training of the teachers in its delivery. Even when the teachers are trained in making the curriculum meaningful, they often do not utilize their training experience in the classroom.

> *If you are thinking a year ahead, sow a seed.*
> *If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree.*
> *If you are thinking a hundred years ahead, educate the people.*
>
> Kuan Tzu, philosopher

In-service training (IST)

TEACHER training often fails to prepare teachers for the reality of the classroom, in terms of large classes, insufficient and/or poor-quality teaching and learning materials, vast differences in the capabilities of the learners, and in some cases, the complexity of having to cater for the different languages spoken by the children. This inadequacy in teacher training, together with the changing learning environment, puts pressure on education systems to provide in-service training (IST), as a regular part of education delivery. In-service training is frequently suggested as an important strategy for implementing change, and improving the process of teaching and learning in the primary school classroom. Experience indicates, however, that IST is often ineffective in these areas.

Teachers frequently enjoy, and participate fully in, IST for reasons which include:

◆ The opportunity to meet, discuss and socialize with fellow teachers;

◆ The per diems on offer (what one partici-
pant termed 'per diemitis');

◆ The fulfilment of formal promotion criteria;

◆ The qualification/certificate awarded, or
status accorded the teacher who received
the training.

However, the transfer to the classroom of skills
learned is often limited, due to the following
factors:

◆ A mismatch between the assumptions
about classroom conditions (implicit in the
IST training curriculum and the classroom
curriculum), and the actual reality of the
classroom (poor physical environment,
inadequate learning materials, very large
classes, multi-grade classes, diverse learning
needs, etc.);

◆ The absence of follow-up support by
knowledgeable and experienced supervi-
sors;

◆ The demands of examinations, whose
structure and content may not have
changed in line with changes in the primary
curriculum and pedagogy.

Two proposals were made for establishing sus-
tainable support for in-service teacher educa-
tion on a large scale. One was the strategic
clustering of primary schools led by one of the
head teachers, and supported by a team of
resource teachers. The other is for a distance
education programme developed in response
to the resources and realities of the local envi-
ronment. Various media would need to be uti-
lized to transmit the training programme. The
advantages and limitations of both proposals
were discussed.

Teaching methods used in in-service training

I T is vital that teachers have experience of
the learning methods that are being pro-
moted. No amount of learning from books
can be a substitute for experience when it
comes to methods of teaching and learning.
Methods used within IST are frequently lec-

ture-based, in spite of the fact that education
reform is encouraging a move away from this
method. Hence teachers may be taught about
the value of group work, or about child-centred
work through the 'chalk and talk' method, or,
frequently, through 'talk' alone. The whole-class
lecture method may remain useful for certain
types of learning and information transfer,
especially when there are few learning materi-
als. But this is not effective or appropriate in
many situations. Only teachers who have had
good practice and experiences of other learn-
ing methods during their training, can break the
mould of the lecture method. (It was interest-
ing and amusing to witness, in this workshop,
the resistance of participants when requested
by Dr Little to move from a whole-group lec-
ture into small discussion groups!).

> **When you wish to instruct,
> be brief... Every word
> that is unnecessary only pours
> over the side of a brimming
> mind.**
>
> *Cicero, Roman orator*

Understanding how children learn (as distinct from how teachers teach)

I F EFA is to be achieved, it will be only
through children's learning. Teachers and
parents often believe that learning occurs
only when teachers teach, and they may under-
estimate how much learning occurs through
independent activity and experience.

Participants were asked to consider
how much children have learned before they
enter school, and how much they continue to
learn outside the school, alongside their 'formal
learning' (e.g. in the fields, in the street, at the
market, around the home). It was observed that
children learn naturally through curiosity,
observation, role-models, practice, trial and
error, task stimulation, play, asking questions,
talking about what they are doing with others,
and so on.

Participants were asked to reflect upon the following:

a) How much of what we know of children's learning outside the classroom is brought into the classroom?

b) How many of our curriculum materials include activities, exercises and tasks that permit learners to make use of them successfully, and assess themselves without the direct involvement of the teacher?

c) How can classroom expectations and routines be changed, so that children understand that they are allowed to learn in the classroom, even without the teacher's orders?

The above considerations point to the benefits of child-friendly learning environments. Education programmes that are child-friendly show positive results. The child-friendly school is flexible, and sensitive to the diverse abilities of children. It recognizes the important role of teachers, and encourages them to be effective in optimizing learning outcomes. It promotes quality teaching, and learning processes and universal values, that help children to learn to live together in harmony. In a child-friendly school the physical environment is healthy, hygienic, safe and gender-sensitive. It encourages the participation of communities, and especially the involvement of parents.

Chapter Two
Local governance – strategies and options

In recent years a participatory approach in education has been encouraged, in order that education can respond better to the learning needs of children in various situations and locations. Education should be integrated into the life of communities, should recognize various cognitive styles and should be accountable to the people that it serves. This strategy for the implementation of education will require changes in the overall administration and management, and a redefining of roles and responsibilities of traditional structures and practices, in areas such as school inspection, the management of schools, and levels of authority.

With the growing pressure for reform many countries are seeking greater accountability, increased educational coverage, better student learning outcomes, efficient use of public resources, equity, and a willingness to consider radical solutions. Many countries are decentralizing their education systems to enable communities to participate in educational decision-making. Governments that advocate local governance reforms are being welcomed by communities. Research has shown that the process can be cost-effective. In some instances, costs have been reduced by 50 per cent. The challenge now is to build linkages between research and practice to inform the policy dialogue on these issues. The core question is: how can educational governance at local levels contribute towards meeting the challenges of EFA, and improve the quality and equity of education for all?

While several countries in Africa are moving towards local governance reforms in education, and in particular school based management, the decentralization process is still at the threshold. In order to strengthen the reform process, countries would need to give greater attention to the following areas:

◆ The political, social, and economic context in a country. Reforms have to be a gradual process, according to capacity and readiness;

◆ Collaboration between the Ministry of Education and other ministries and civic organizations governed by local governments, and the community itself;

◆ Setting up clear rules for the transfer of power and resources, by setting objective standards for recruitment, and for improved transparency;

◆ Participation of learners, parents, school staff and community members, including women, the poor, and the less-educated, in the decision-making processes;

◆ Strengthening capacities at all levels to enable various stakeholders to participate in the implementation processes;

◆ Evaluation to provide empirical evidence on the efficacy and limitations of the reform process towards achieving the EFA goals;

◆ Awareness-raising at community levels through the use of the media.

Functions and responsibilities should be gradually decentralized during the process. This would enable the local level to build the appropriate capacity so that decentralized activities can be effectively undertaken. The following

proposal identifies the types of functions that may be retained by the central authority, and those that may be decentralized.

Key functions at the central level:
◆ Pedagogical quality;
◆ Curriculum standards;
◆ Teacher development;
◆ Training and capacity building for school council members;
◆ Textbook screening;
◆ Data collection, analysis and feedback to schools;
◆ Student assessment;
◆ Equalizing funding;
◆ Targeting support for vulnerable groups (for example: girls' scholarship programmes)
◆ Teacher networking, cluster resource centres;
◆ Guidance and counselling programmes;
◆ Clear "rules of the game" and transparency
◆ Guidelines for school council elections (clear roles and responsibilities);

Key functions for school level management:
◆ Monitoring school functioning;
◆ Developing school plans;
◆ Controlling locally generated and centrally transferred funds for operations;
◆ Management;
◆ Participating in the hiring and firing of teachers and the head teacher, and performance incentives (in Kenya, teachers themselves participate in interviewing new teachers);
◆ Construction, maintenance of physical plant, signing procurements;
◆ Administering school scholarships;
◆ Co-curricular activities;
◆ Encouraging student participation and retention (especially excluded groups)

As education systems try to move towards these more participatory approaches, new avenues open and new challenges arise.
       The meeting focused on three closely linked areas:
◆ School-based management
◆ School supervision

◆ Monitoring and evaluation of the process of policy implementation for the establishment of local governance.

School-based management

THE education reform trends of the 1990s reflected the growing concern for accountability, increased educational coverage, improved student learning outcomes, more efficient use of public resources, equity, and a willingness to consider radical solutions. School-based management was considered an important reform option. A significant factor is that it would shift the responsibility of the school to its personnel, and the community that it serves. Experiences in developed countries such as New Zealand, Australia and the USA (in Chicago), have shown positive outcomes of school-based management. Research evidence from developing countries, such as El Salvador and Nicaragua, shows improved teacher attendance in schools, and increased student learning. Experience has also shown that school-based management must be accompanied by good planning, appropriate levels of inputs, and support that will motivate and stimulate a school-based management environment.

       Many issues have been raised concerning the extent to which school-based management will ensure standards, equity and transparency. What authority should be transferred to the school-based management, and what levels of authority should rest outside the scope of the management team? Communities are not homogeneous, they differ in human and financial resources, and some have illiterate populations. Some argue that illiterate communities can hardly be expected to manage schools. Others have responded by pointing out the difference between illiteracy and ignorance, noting that illiterate persons can make a significant, and very positive, contribution to school-based management.

       The extent of the responsibility transferred to the communities depends largely on

the capacity of the communities to undertake such responsibilities effectively.

School Supervision

THE inspectorate of schools was designed to supervise the school system, and started out as a policing structure to ensure quality and access to education through frequent visits to schools. As education systems expanded, this approach to the supervision of education became progressively less effective, as the cost of maintaining the inspectorate is more than most governments can afford. Furthermore, the schools should be accountable to the people that they serve, and not only to a national administration. In this context, countries are exploring a new role for the inspectors of schools.

The following are some suggested steps for initiating a new role for inspectors of schools:
◆ Define the purpose of supervision in the context of the participation of the beneficiaries of education in the planning, programming and delivery of education;
◆ Identify the tasks to be supervised;
◆ Identify the roles and responsibilities of the school head teachers;
◆ Map the inspectorate, identifying qualitative and quantitative resources, as well as the geographical distribution of the school inspectors;
◆ Identify the roles and responsibilities of the school inspectors at all levels of administration – central, regional and local government authority;
◆ Consider renaming the inspectorate to reflect its new supportive role

The inspectorate can be conceived as a structure for quality control, to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of education. In this way the inspectorate would move away from traditional school inspection, to a role of supporting teachers and school personnel with practical guidance and feedback, evaluating the function-

ing of the system, and ensuring that there is appropriate feedback into the decision-making process.

This new inspectorate would be linked more closely with staff motivation, and development programmes for head teachers and serving teachers, resource allocation and utilization, the quality of inputs to the school system, transparency and accountability, and the evaluation of the performance of primary education. The day-to-day management and supervision of the school would be left to the head teachers.

Inspectors can establish linkages and networks among the various parts of the system, so that they support each other, taking advantage of new opportunities created by advances in technology. With a view to achieving the goals of Education For All, the inspectorate can act as a catalyst for enabling the education system to reach the, as yet, unreached groups, and can also provide early warning of challenging situations that may arise. Thus inspectors would keenly observe, and report progress, in gender equity, the enrolment of street children, and other excluded groups, the promotion of human rights and universal values, and the security of school systems.

Capacity building
for inspectors

INSPECTORS will need a staff development programme to build their capacity in the new skills that they will require to implement effectively the reformed inspectorate.

Evaluation
of the inspectorate system

THE inspectorate should evaluate its effectiveness against the goals of Education For All. Evaluation should be regarded positively, as a tool for ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, and for improving the new role of the inspectorate.

Cost implications

REFORM of the inspectorate will incur costs, and therefore cost factors should be carefully identified. Many of the changes in the inspectorate can be undertaken by reorienting and redirecting existing resources. Some aspects of the changes will need certain additional resources, such as the mapping of the inspectorate, the identification of training needs, and the development of the training programme, etc. Other changes will need large investments, such as the training of inspectors and the networking of the inspectorate, particularly through the use of international communication technology.

Monitoring and evaluation of a local governance policy

The presentation and discussions covered:
◆ the challenges of evaluation;
◆ methodology of the framework for evaluation;
◆ defining the transfer of authority;
◆ the critical areas to be addressed;
◆ the challenges of measuring outcomes.

Following a decision to introduce local governance into the education system, every effort must be made to monitor and evaluate progress in its implementation. The challenge is to develop a framework for evaluation, to assess the contribution of educational governance at local levels in achieving EFA goals. Such a framework would include a set of key performance indicators appropriate for the system/model of local governance.

The transfer of authority should be strategically managed, giving special attention to:
◆ the characteristics of the beneficiaries;
◆ the level of authority to be transferred;
◆ the nature of the process and the objectives for evaluation.

Further to this, all levels of the system must understand that evaluation is not a punitive measure, but a tool for improvement of the processes and outcomes of decentralization.

In the monitoring and evaluation of a local governance policy, nine critical dimensions were suggested:
1. Management and administration
2. Capacity building
3. Mobilization and distribution of resources
4. Participation at each level
5. Reporting and accountability
6. Quality of education
7. Efficiency of education
8. Redistribution of roles and responsibilities
9. Legislation

Each country will seek to determine its own indicators under the nine dimensions. However, these indicators should be limited according to national capacities to analyse and utilize the data to improve processes and outcomes. Although many of the quantitative measures already exist in the system, much more work is needed to establish qualitative measures.

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Chapter Three

Care and education for all children –
the school as a supportive environment

Aʟʟ children will learn in an environment that is designed to assist them. In the context of achieving education for all, the school must provide holistic education that addresses both the cognitive and affective domains, and that provides for their physical, social, mental and spiritual needs. Support for children is required especially in the following areas: nutrition, health and sanitation, the teaching of universal values, guidance and counselling.

At the level of the overall system, UNICEF is supporting child-friendly schools, while The World Bank promotes school-based management. For its part, UNESCO also encourages the use of the environment as a source of teaching and learning aids. Technological development will provide new opportunities for improving the learning environment.

Beyond these are a number of programmes which have not received mass implementation, but may hold the key for sustained access, retention, and performance in primary education. These include the areas of school feeding, health and sanitation, values-based education, and guidance and counselling services. Several note-worthy programmes were represented at the meeting, and presentations of these programmes by their representatives stimulated discussion in the working groups.

School feeding programmes

These take various forms, ranging from the year-round programme in Tamil Nadu, to the provision of school lunches with the help of communities. For many years, The World Food Programme has been the main support for school feeding. Evidence shows that there is a close relationship between school feeding and improved school attendance. The provision of food has been utilized as an incentive for children to attend school. School feeding programmes are most sustainable when the communities are actively involved in providing the lunches for the children. However, for the programme to be successful, school leadership needs to be able to motivate and mobilize the community, especially in areas where enrolment is low. Not all approaches to school feeding have been successful. Schools need to give priority to finding effective ways of providing for children's nutrition.

School health and sanitation programmes are essential for the welfare of children in school, particularly for schools in the poorest areas. The promotion of such programmes requires close cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. In the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and other illnesses that hamper the education of children, the strengthening of preventive programmes in schools is critical, particularly in Africa. All schools should aim to ensure a minimum provision of health and sanitation services, covering such areas as clean drinking water, separate toilets for girls and boys, access to health services for vaccination, de-worming, and vitamins for children in areas where wide-scale deficiency has been identified. Major education programme structures such as SWAP, PRSP and UNDAF offer com-

ponents specifically designed to improve school health and sanitation. The time has come, however, when interventions must be made on a scale that is comparable with the growing magnitude of school health needs.

Universal values in education

Confidence-building and self-esteem, positive attitudes to schooling, and developing good relationships with adults and peers, will contribute to the better performance of children. The many social, economic, cultural and technological changes in society create pressures and demands on young people, and in order to deal with these effectively they need appropriate skills. They need to be given high priority in schools. Children need to understand universal values, and to develop attitudes and behaviour that can guide their lives, and help them to make wise choices. Such programmes as "Living Values: An Educational Program" can help children to understand, experience and put into practice universal values. Above all, the promotion of values in education can build the foundations of peace, respect, understanding, tolerance and cooperation, so that children learn to live together. Essential to this discussion is that values are living, and need to be demonstrated practically by the teachers themselves. Training for teachers in values-based education should be encouraged. The role of parents and the community as a whole in reinforcing cultural and social values cannot be over-emphasized.

Guidance and counselling services

These should be established in all schools as a matter of policy, particularly in the face of rising social problems, such as HIV/AIDS, racial disharmony and violence in schools. The Guidance, Counselling and Youth Development Programme in Africa offers opportunities for the training of trainers in counselling services. It aims to provide teachers with basic skills in guidance and counselling, so that they can assist children at the primary level, particularly girls. The programme now reaches 27 countries,

each at different stages of implementation. It is proposed that the programme be expanded progressively to other regions, and efforts will be made to strengthen the use of technology in its delivery, to ensure a wider coverage of the training programme.

Recognizing that not all governments can recruit personnel to provide counselling services alone, the following recommendations were made:
♦ Initial/pre-service training of teachers should include guidance and counselling;
♦ Each school should assign one teacher as the school counsellor (alongside their regular duties) and inform the children and staff accordingly;
♦ In-service training and support materials should be provided for the "school counsellors."

Peace, political stability, a human rights approach, and post-conflict rehabilitation for war-affected children, should be given special attention. Universal values and gender issues are important common themes, while partnerships, community involvement and capacity building, are key factors in the planning and implementation of the non-academic dimensions of education.

Strengthening support systems in schools

THERE are some areas in which effective planning and a more efficient use of resources can help. More large-scale investment is needed, to ensure adequate water and sanitation in schools, large-scale training of educational personnel and expansion in the HIV/AIDS preventive programmes. In developing such programmes, attention must be given to gender issues, cultural values, community involvement and support, affordable options, cost effectiveness, sustainability, and adaptability to local needs.

Chapter Four

Monitoring progress and evaluation in primary education performance in efforts to achieve Education for All

EVALUATION and feedback for improving policies and practices in education are still not an integral part of primary education systems. Yet they are essential tools, which, if used strategically, will contribute to qualitative and quantitative improvements. In view of the commitment to EFA, evaluation must become a part of the process to achieve education for all. The evaluation that is now carried out is often prompted by the donor community in the context of providing resources for education.

The World Bank, for example, has an Evaluation Unit, that evaluates bank-funded projects all over the world. OED has undertaken studies on the performance of projects in primary education. The findings of this Unit over the past years have been instructive. Less than 50 per cent of primary education projects financed by The World Bank are said to have produced substantial institutional development. Only 40 per cent of primary education projects are judged to be sustainable, and overall results are considered satisfactory in only 70 per cent of cases. From the perspective of World Bank performance, the satisfaction levels for appraisal and supervision were lower for primary education projects than for projects in other sub-systems of education. With regard to the implementation performance of the borrower, primary education performance is below the average of the education sector.

The results vary between the various components of education. School construction was favoured over school repairs. Community construction of schools is burdensome, and low-cost school designs are less popular. At the level of instruction, multi-grade and double-shift practice may be deficient, textbooks are insufficient, and other instructional materials are rare. Poor children face problems with official languages, urban/rural differences are marked, and health and nutrition interventions are rare. The classroom is generally teacher-centred, and there is limited attention paid to the affective domain. The conditions and services of teachers are undesirable, and supervision is weak. The management and administration of education also tend to be inadequate.

Although quantitative measures in primary education have been fairly well developed, much work is needed to be done to improve the measures to evaluate the quality of education. Furthermore, there is a need for the acceptance and understanding of the use of information and data, so that countries are less likely to distort their data. To date education management systems are lacking in quality, and also in timely outputs.

Recommended procedures were made as follows:
- The domains of primary education to be evaluated
- Access
- Quality
- Management and efficiency
- Decentralization

The resources needed to undertake the evaluation should be identified, that is, the human,

financial and material resources for each of the domains to be evaluated. Following an identification of all the available resources in the government and the community, donors can be approached to fill the gaps.

Suggested timing for evaluation of the primary education sub-system

EVALUATION should be undertaken every five years so that the results will contribute to improvements for the new cohort of first grade pupils. This evaluation does not preclude the formative evaluation that may be undertaken each year, and in specific areas. In this way, it is expected that each cohort will receive greater benefit from the education system. Available data would be utilized and additional data and information collected as needed.

Presentation of report to reach various levels of the population

A TECHNICAL presentation would be made for the planners and policy-makers. The report would be presented in tables, and in simple statements in the local languages for parents and other members of the community. It will address positive outcomes, while indicating areas in which improvements are needed. It would aim to motivate the stakeholders.

Steps needed to introduce performance evaluation as part of the education process.

IN identifying the steps, the group focused on student assessment. Through further dialogue, participants to the meeting will be invited to identify the steps needed to introduce the evaluation of primary education performance in their respective countries.

Costs and financing

IN assessing the costs of proposals for bringing to scale, the first step should be to review national resources to determine which costs can be reoriented to support the new proposal. "Seed money" needed for research, preparation for training programmes, etc., can be mobilized from agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF. Large-scale funding would be mobilized for the large-scale activities such as national training for all local government authorities, the introduction of a new curriculum, the training of all head teachers. However, for sustained support to the system, the recurrent costs would need to be in the national budget. When developing a new proposal, its sustained support should be ascertained.

Chapter Five
Final Comments and Conclusions

DUE to constraints of time, the final session was brief. However the essence of the meeting was captured in the following comments (participants were asked to give their overall impression, in one word only):

> *'fruitful', 'relevant', 'stimulating',*
> *'valuable', 'opportune',*
> *'pro active', 'passionate'(!)*

It was generally agreed that the presentations were inspiring, the workshops purposeful, and the atmosphere warm and friendly. There was a high level of commitment, and a determination to find solutions to problems, and to recommend concrete plans of action.

It was evident that in most African countries there is a growing tendency for more decentralization in the formulation and implementation of education policies, and school management. There is also a trend away from a traditionally rigid curriculum dictated by ministries, to one where there is increased decision-making by parents and communities.

It was encouraging to hear that in primary education there is a move towards a more holistic child-centred approach, with increasing importance given to non-academic areas, and a greater adaptability to cultural influences.

Social and economic problems place huge pressures on schools (*e.g. malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of resources, large class-sizes and increasing numbers of orphans due to HIV/AIDS*).

In addition, many teachers tend to suffer from low morale, which in turn affects their performance, and ultimately the educational standards of the schools. Inadequate salaries, low status in society, and a variety of problems in the classroom, are contributory factors. Participants stressed the need to empower teachers to gain self-respect, enthusiasm and creativity: to see themselves positively as role models in a profession that was once referred to as "the noble profession".

Before departing, participants were asked to give some pointers for the future:
- we must adapt and adopt good principles and practices;
- we must value and encourage the participation of the community, not forgetting that members of communities may be illiterate, but not necessarily ignorant, and can make a significant and positive contribution to school management;
- the results of this meeting should be transmitted to policy-makers and politicians and shared with teachers during in-service training;
- let's take the initiative forward!
- Peace and Unity in Africa is possible!

Annexe 1.

Programme

Monday, 9 July

9.30–11.00 Opening
Chairperson's opening remarks
Remarks - Mr. A. Parsuramen, Director,
UNESCO - BREDA
Remarks - Dr. Seydou Cisse, ISESCO
Main Address - H.E. Mr. Moustapha Sarong,
Minister of Education, Senegal,
presented by the Director of Primary
Education

11.30–12.30 Remarks:
Mr. Ian Hopwood, UNICEF,
Presentation and discussion of terms
of reference
Presenter: Dr. Winsome Gordon,
Director, Primary Education Section,
UNESCO

**14.00–15.00 Education for All Children
by 2015 – a global agenda**
Presenter: Dr. Seydou Cisse, ISESCO
The follow-up to Dakar in Africa -
UNESCO/BREDA

**15.00–16.00 Advancing the role
of teachers – professional development
and the place of in-service teacher**
training
Facilitator: Dr. Angela Little
University of London

**16.30–17.30 Organization
of working groups**

Tuesday, 10 July

**9.30–11.00 Enhancing learning -
curriculum adaptation and creative
use of available resources**
Facilitator: Dr. Marcel S. Ouattara,
UNICEF

**11.30–12.30 Evaluating the performance
of primary education**
Presenter: Ms Helen Abadzi,
The World Bank

14.00–17.30 Working groups

Wednesday, 11 July

**10.00–12.00 Education field visit
to INEADE** (Institut National d'Etude
et d'Action pour le Développement
de l'Education), Dakar
Organizers: UNESCO/BREDA Office,
and Senegal Officials

Thursday, 12 July

9.00–11.00 Round-table discussions
Governance at the local level
Coordinator: Ms Faryal Khan,
UNESCO
Assessing progress in educational
governance at the local level.
Presenter: Mr. Trevino, Consultant,
Harvard University, USA

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11.30–12.30 *Round-table discussions*
School-based management-
operationalizing the approach
> *Presenter:* Ms Barbara Bruns,
> The World Bank
Changing the role of the inspectorate
> *Presenter:* Professor K. Sujatha, India

14.00–15.00 *Round-table discussions*
The school as a caring and enabling
environment for all children
School feeding in India
> *Presenter:* Dr Minnie Mathew,
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United Nations World Food Programme
Living Values: An Educational Program
(LVEP)
> *Presenter:* Helen Sayers, LVEP
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Education of girls in Africa - coping with
the changing socio-economic environment
and promoting self-reliance
> *Presenter:* Dr. Winsome Gordon,
Director, Primary Education Section,
UNESCO

15.30–17.30 *Working groups*

Friday, 13 July

9.00–11.00 *Presentations
of the working groups*

11.30–13.30 *Consolidating proposed
strategies and the way forward*

13.00–13.30 *Closing session*
Report by Rapporteur General
(Nigeria, Mali)
Remarks - Dr Winsome Gordon
Remarks - Participants
Closing Speech - H.E. Mr. Moustapha
Sarong, Minister of Education, Senegal

Workshop groups

Group 1. In-service training of teachers –
adaptation of the curriculum
Group 2. Local governance – strategies
and options
Group 3. Care and education for
all children – the school as a supportive
environment
Group 4. Monitoring progress and evaluation
in primary education

Annexe 2.
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Annexe 3

Opening Speeches

Main Address:

H.E. Mr Moustapha Sarong,
Minister of Education,
Senegal
Presented by the Director
of Primary Education

THE Minister expressed his pleasure that so many eminent experts from all over the world had gathered to discuss essential questions related to primary education.

He highlighted some of the major difficulties facing African countries, where millions of children do not have access to education, the performance of students is generally poor, and many types of discrimination still exist. In addition, there are serious problems concerning teachers' working conditions, the students' learning environment, the lack of materials and inadequate provision for training teachers.

By choosing as your overall objective the identification of concrete strategies to ensure access to quality primary education for all children by 2015, your reflections will be directly in line with those that have guided Senegal for a long time, that is

finding ways and means to increase access to education, and to improve the quality of learning.

The Minister stated that Senegal has committed itself to these aims by setting up a programme for a Decade for Education and Training (Programme Décennal de l'Education et de la Formation - PDEF) 2000 - 2010. In the wake of the Dakar Declaration, efforts will be directed especially towards initiatives which improve teachers' qualifications, the school environment and support for students, particularly those from the most vulnerable sections of society.

He concluded by emphasizing the necessity to involve the community in all aspects of the development, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes, and the importance of mobilizing the financial resources required to achieve these strategies and goals.

M. Armoogum Parsuramen,
Director of BREDA

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

THE quality of primary education has not kept pace with the expansion in enrolment over the past decades. Many innovative approaches have been introduced, but these are not enough to meet the goals of EFA. The commitment of the Dakar Forum underscores the need to strengthen our combined efforts to improve the quality of education, while expanding education systems to reach the excluded. Teacher training and performance are essential contributors to the quality of education because the teacher is at the core of the education system. Beyond this, the curriculum for the primary age group should lay the foundations of learning, and civil society should be actively involved in the development and provision of primary education, particularly at the local level. The present move towards the decentralization of education, and the strengthening of local governance structures, will create a greater synergy between com-

munities and schools, so that they benefit each other.

In the meantime there is a growing recognition in developing countries that the school should take a greater responsibility for the development of the young. Thus guidance and counselling services should be available to all children assisting them to make their education more meaningful. Essentially their experience in education should prepare them to live together in peace and harmony, showing respect for each other, and understanding the importance of universal values and human rights. The Dakar Framework for Action recognizes the need for a better supervision of education systems and for greater accountability. In this context the monitoring and evaluation of primary education performance will lead to more appropriate policies and strategies, and greater transparency in the way education is managed.

Education for All is a global agenda that requires sustained national action to ensure that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, culture, religion, gender, disability, or geographical location, should have access to education, and should learn.

UNESCO, in collaboration with other EFA partners, is encouraging all countries to prepare, or to consolidate their plans for achieving education for all. UNESCO has reoriented its education programmes to reflect better the priorities of the Dakar Forum, and will continue to provide technical assistance in support of strengthening national capacities to achieve Education For All.

Version francaise

Mesdames et Messieurs
les participants,

COMME l'UNESCO et l'ISESCO, vous rêvez, vous militez et oeuvrez pour l'avènement rapide d'une Afrique éclairée, ayant remporté sa lutte pour la libération de l'esprit; l'avènement d'une Afrique paisible et prospère. Par votre réflexion et vos recommandations durant cet atelier, vous souhaitez contribuer positivement à l'amélioration des résultats obtenus par les élèves dans l'enseignement primaire, apportant ainsi votre pierre à l'œuvre merveilleuse et exaltante d'Education Pour Tous et de développement de l'Afrique.

Je ne peux donc que vous souhaiter plein succès dans ces travaux. Mes collègues ici présents, venus du Siège ou du BREDA, vous accompagneront tout au long des travaux, et feront tout ce qui est en leur pouvoir pour vous faciliter la tâche. Parmi ces collègues, permettez- moi de relever la présence de Madame Winsome Gordon, Directrice de la Division de l'Enseignement Primaire au Siège de l'UNESCO. Chère collègue, nous sommes heureux de vous avoir parmi nous.

Honorables invités,
Mesdames et Messieurs
les participants,

Encore une fois, plein succès dans vos travaux et bon séjour au Sénégal, pays de la Téranga. Je vous remercie pour votre aimable attention.

Annexe 4.
Closing Speeches

Winsome Gordon,

Director,

Primary Education Section,

UNESCO, Paris

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have come to the end of one week of deliberations on selected key challenges in primary education. I hope that the experience was as rewarding for you as it was for me. There was much evidence of how countries are attempting to achieve Education for All.

One of the important lessons that I have learnt is balance. In all the innovations and initiatives that we discussed, there was a word of caution. We also learnt that there is a time and place for everything. The contextual variations among the countries underscores the fact that there is not one method in the reform of education. Such a reality questions the use of the term "best practice".

We are, however, united in the common goal to achieve education for all children by the year 2015. Many of the challenges can be met by a more efficient use of resources, and bringing to educational reform processes our naturally creative abilities to match programmes to needs. If we are firm in our belief that all children should learn, then there is a need to establish an educational environment that is holistic, and in which the child can realize its full potential.

Our education systems must promote human rights and responsibilities, while helping children and young people to inculcate universal values, that will help us to live together in an atmosphere of peace, dignity and respect for all. The challenges are in some respects overwhelming. HIV/AIDS is eroding much of the capacity to deliver education. Civil unrest continues to plague some countries, and natural disasters are creating new problems for education. Nearly a billion people – mainly women – live in abject poverty and, furthermore, the economic forecast is gloomy for many countries.

Despite these challenges, advances in science and technology are opening up new avenues for education outreach and quality. They also open up real possibilities for all children to learn together, and yet satisfy their diverse learning needs. They create an opening for community management, while accessing national and international support. In a few months' time we will have completed two years following the Dakar meeting. The real test of the progress towards Education for All is at the Grade 1 and 2 levels. This is the group that will reflect the results of the changes in the education system.

As we leave here, I hope that we will travel with a personal commitment to do what we can to contribute to the goals of education for all children.

I take this opportunity to thank you for making the effort to come here. We are aware of the challenges of travel in Africa. Special thanks are due to the national authorities that have made this experience a reality, particularly to the staff of INEADE. A very special thanks to the Director of BREDA and his team, but particularly to Mr Sanwidi and Ms Dorkenoo, who had to put up with my demands. The team in the photocopying room has been extremely supportive and I would like to thank them. Thanks to the interpreters who kept the communication channels open, and to the cafeteria management and

staff, who assured that we were sufficiently reinforced so that we could exercise our right to participate in the discussions.

Dr Seydou Cisse,
ISESCO

Summary

O N behalf of His Excellency, the Director-General of ISESCO, Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Dr Seydou Cisse thanked the Senegalese authorities for their warm hospitality, and UNESCO for the quality of preparation of the workshop and for selecting such appropriate themes.

He stressed the importance of the role of teachers, the improvement of children's learning, the adoption of effective programmes, efficient use of available resources, evaluation of the quality of teaching, and the direct involvement of the community in school management.

He noted that the enthusiasm shown in the discussions was a measure of the interest of the participants, praising them for their attention to every detail in their quest to achieve the results hoped for.

Dr Cisse congratulated the participants, and wished them success in their future endeavours, whilst encouraging them to put into practical application the wisdom and expertise gained from these meetings.

Annexe 5.

Summary of discussions and presentations made during the working groups

1. Enhancing learning – curriculum adaptation and creative use of available resources

Facilitator:
Dr. Marcel S. Ouattara,
Programme Officer (Education), UNICEF, Ouagadougou

The main points arising from presentation and discussion:
■ The achievement of quality education for all children can only be realized by meeting certain basic conditions, which include training the teachers, restructuring the curriculum, and making the school child-friendly.
■ Curriculum content should cover relevant societal issues, e.g. HIV/AIDS, gender factors and the national objectives of education.
■ The training of teachers should be geared specifically towards the curriculum requirements of the country.
■ Issues of certification often affect curriculum implementation, due to the tendency of schools and teachers to place priority on pupils passing examinations.
■ Core curriculum should remain centralized.
■ The quality of the curriculum could be enhanced through con-

tinuous review, which should ensure relevance and manageability, and also through the provision of appropriate learning and teaching materials.
■ Curriculum developers and supervisors should receive regular in-service training to ensure the quality of the curriculum.
■ Curriculum development should be a core subject in teacher training courses.

2. Living values: an educational program (LVEP)

Presented by
Helen Sayers – LVEP
Coordinator for Switzerland

LIVING Values: An Educational Program (LVEP), is a partnership among educators around the world. It is currently supported by UNESCO, sponsored by the Spanish Committee of UNICEF, the Planet Society, and the Brahma Kumaris in consultation with the Education Cluster of UNICEF, (New York). The programme is currently being implemented in about 70 countries

Living Values offers a wide variety of experiential activities and practical methodologies to teachers, facilitators, parents and carers that enable children to explore and develop twelve universal values: Peace, Respect, Cooperation, Freedom, Happiness, Honesty, Humility, Love, Responsibility, Simplicity, Tolerance, and Unity.

LVEP has special materials for parents and carers, refugee children, and children affected by war and earthquakes. Materials are now being developed for street children.

Designed to address the whole child/person, Living Values activities build interpersonal social and emotional skills, values-based perspectives and behaviour. Students are engaged in reflection, visualization and artistic expression to draw out their ideas. Cognitive and emotional skills grow as they are engaged in creative and analytical thinking and problem solving. The approach is child-centred, flexible and interactive, with adults acting mainly as facilitators. During LVEP training, educators are encouraged to create a values-based atmosphere, in which all students can feel respected, valued, understood, loved and safe.

Educators are inspired to act as role models, empowering children to enjoy learning and to implement values in their daily lives.

The programme has great potential for use in developing countries, as it is inexpensive to run and easily integrated into on-going curricula.

3. Improving the pedagogy of teachers focusing on the adaptation of the curriculum at the level of the classroom

Facilitated by **Dr Angela Little**, Institute of Education, University of London

THE group was invited to explore the questions below and make concrete proposals, indicating possible obstacles and how to overcome them. The group was asked to identify what can be done within national resources, and areas where support is needed from external partners.

How can in-service teacher training and development be included in the mainstream of education, so that teachers are more effective in stimulating pupils' learning? Who would determine the training needs of teachers and how would these needs be identified?

Some areas that have been high-lighted in discussing the follow-up to the Dakar Forum:

School-based training – How can this be done? Who will do the training?

Teachers' clusters – Teachers from selected schools work together. How feasible or practical is this for rural areas? What could be the frequency of training sessions? What would be the main cost areas?

Distance training for teachers – How practical is this approach? Which media, or mix of media, could prove useful? What would be the role of on-line services in providing pedagogical support for teachers, and what would be needed in a Ministry of Education spearheading such an initiative?

Using teacher-training institutions as focal points for all teachers, how could colleges participate in pedagogical support to teachers, even in a small way?

Summary of the main points arising from the discussion:

■ The Head Teacher should be the base-line supervisor and trainer at the school level, therefore a high level of competence would be required. The Head Teacher would need to conduct preliminary needs assessments. Wherever possible a department should be created within the school to deal with training needs.

■ INSET training - this could be effectively achieved through clusters of schools in urban areas, but in most cases it would be more efficient to hold training in individual schools in rural areas. Evaluation of the impact of training would inform future planning

■ Distance training, with the use of well-prepared guidelines and materials, and utilizing I.T. facilities where available, was seen as an efficient method that would ensure quality.

■ Existing teacher-training college's resources should be used for training to help in cost-effectiveness.

4. Local governance: strategies and options

Facilitated by
Professor K. Sujatha, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, India;
Ms Barbara Bruns,
The World Bank, USA; and
Mr. German Trevino,
Consultant, Harvard University, USA.

MANY countries have attempted some form of governance at the local level, and have had various degrees of success. However, the new emphasis on reaching all children with good quality education, demands that the school system be more flexible and more accessible to all children. Such demands can be met when the school has greater responsibility for its resources, processes and outputs. In this context, attention must be given to reforming educational governance, to create stronger incentives for school quality and system efficiency.

The working group was asked to focus on two main areas:

■ *Local governance and school-based management:*

What models of school-based management have worked best, and in what context have they worked?

What enabling conditions or support can maximize the successful implementation of school-based management and its impact?

What aspects of education need to be decentralized to school level? What would be the elements of major costs? How

would progress be monitored? Who would monitor such progress?

What would be the implications of such changes for other aspects of management and administration in the education system?

■ *The supervision of schools*
The traditional approach to school supervision is generally unsustainable and ineffective in many developing countries. Assuming no increase in budget or staffing the group was asked:

To propose two options for the inspectorate that would take the inspectorate role out of frequent school visits and still maintain "quality control"

For each option indicate:
- the main cost centres;
- the organization of inspectors to support the system;
- the contribution of inspectors to strengthen school-based management, and
- the job description

Summary of main points arising from the discussions
■ Governments should be encouraged to continue to develop strategies to decentralize school management, according to the specific local situations in their countries.
■ Supervision includes much more than inspection. The word "inspector" implies a policing role, and should ideally be changed.
■ Head teachers should play a principal role in the work of inspection.
■ Inspection procedures need to conform to a national plan Inspectors need to be well-qualified and well-motivated.

N.B. The group found that there was so much variation in the situations in their different countries, that few generalizations or recommendations could be made, but it was agreed that the sharing of ideas through the dialogue had been productive.

5. Care and education for all children: the school as a supportive environment

Facilitated by
Mr. Jamie Wickens,
Deputy Director,
Operations Department,
World Food Programme

■ *Working group tasks:*
Children must be provided with a holistic environment that provides academic education whilst catering for the affective domain. Psychosocial and welfare support are essential factors. The school should be a secure environment, in which all children should feel safe, and where a child-friendly atmosphere facilitates their learning.

The group was given the following tasks:
- Identify the key areas of non-academic support needed in the education of children;
- Identify affordable options for providing such support, keeping in mind the various forms of resources that may exist in your country;
- Outline the processes that would be needed to introduce gradually, or strengthen, the support system for children in school.

Summary of main points arising from discussion:
(see Chapter 4 for details)

■ Key areas of non-academic support in schools were identified as follows:
a) Health and Sanitation
Clean drinking water – where possible local wells could be dug.
Adequate clean toilets/latrines are essential for hygiene and self-respect. This should be taken into consideration when schools are built
b) Nutrition
School feeding programmes should be widely implemented, including the provision of micro-nutrient supplements.
Local agricultural production should be encouraged (school gardens, livestock).
c) HIV/AIDS
Appropriate sex education to promote reproductive health, including knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases, preventive measures, etc.
d) Guidance and counselling
Should be an integral part of the curriculum, with a teacher designated as a focal point
Psychological support, special educational needs, and career planning, should be included in teacher training.
Teachers should be encouraged to act as role models for character development.
e) Peace and political stability
Promoting a culture of peace, developing rights-based and values-based approaches to education across the curriculum.
Encourage a participatory approach by teachers and students in school governance.
Post-war rehabilitation essential for the development of affected children.

Common issues in all the above areas included the following:
- Gender issues;
- Cultural values;
- Community involvement and support.

Criteria to be used for effective implementation of action plans in the key areas:

(A flexible framework should be used - with guidelines that are non-specific, and not over-prescriptive). Criteria to include:

Affordability/cost-effectiveness whilst giving priority to areas of health, sanitation and nutrition
- Sustainability;
- Adaptability to local needs and conditions;
- Availability of resources;
- Partnership building;
- Capacity building.

6. A child-friendly, girl-friendly school: a new slogan? a new paradigm?

Summary of paper by
Aline Bory-Adams,
Conseillère Régionale Education,
BROAC, originally presented
at the annual reunion of the
education cluster of UNICEF
for West and Central Africa,
Bamako, 18–23 June, 2001

A recent survey, carried out in Latin America by the Commission of Human Rights, involved 900 children aged 7 to 17 years. The children were asked what they liked or disliked in their school, and to suggest what could be done to make the school more attractive and inviting.

Preliminary results revealed that factors to do with the school environment, atmosphere and rapport with teachers, featured predominantly in the majority of responses.

A friendly atmosphere, friends, play activities, as well as an environment conducive to study, enabling them to obtain good written notes, where they could learn a wide variety of topics, were central to the wishes expressed by the children. As well as all of these factors, they also felt that it was essential to have the support of teachers who were helpful, kind, patient, and who listened to them.

They rejected violence, fighting, mockery, discrimination and above all, over-strict, angry teachers who beat them, did not correct their homework, or who humiliated the children.

These results were not surprising, yet in reality the situation is often very different. This demands that we should reflect on the possibilities of a new model: a school that is child-friendly and also girl-friendly. Only such a school can bring about quality education for all children. In fact, the children who were surveyed were actually demanding such a learning environment that would promote quality education!

In order to carry out research in the area of quality education, we need to consider quality in its broadest sense, according to five main factors:
Results: is there a good standard of achievement and of knowing "how to do", and "how to be", together with an appropriate method of evaluation?

The Student: is he or she valued? - mentally and physically prepared to learn a variety of skills?

The School Environment: what are the physical conditions, material resources? Do school policies and practices protect the child from corporal punishment, humiliation, violence?

Teaching Content – is the curriculum relevant? Are the main skills correctly transmitted? Does the content help the children to become responsible citizens, to develop their various talents, without discrimination against gender, ethnicity or religion?

Teaching Methods – are these child-centred? Do the methods reinforce, or remove, differences between the children?

This framework of reference for quality calls for a new concept, a new model of a school: one that is child-friendly and girl-friendly, where the quest for quality, and for a much broader vision of education is central to every aspect of its existence.

■ *It requires the implementation of a process where:*
There is no beginning and no endpoint. The process does not start from zero, and it does not arrive at a specified destination. There is no final point when a certificate is delivered, or a title given. It is part of a continuous life-long learning process.

By starting not from zero, but from what already exists, there are several possible entry points. The choice of entry point depends on immediate priorities, the existing possibilities, and current initiatives and opportunities.

The aim is to put in practice concomitant strategies, which

impart a certain dynamic that is in line with the new approach, and opposite to the pre-established concept of a minimum set of options. This minimalist approach is restrictive and introduces discrimination, contrary to the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The child-friendly and girl-friendly school approach comprises five essential dimensions, which together define a holistic vision of the full development of the child, and the optimum conditions for the realization of an education of high quality.

■ *What are the characteristics of such a school?*
It would welcome all children without distinction and would uphold the rights of every child. It would be:

a place of high educational standards;

a physically and mentally safe, healthy, environment;

a secure, welcoming place where children are at the centre, and participate fully in achieving their potential;

a place where girls feel welcome, where they can develop fully, where gender equality is upheld in terms of access and achievement;

finally it would be a place where the community and the family are fully involved.

To conclude – the child-friendly and girl-friendly school: is it just a slogan? a new paradigm? **No!** it is a serious commitment to quality Education for All!

Education of girls in Africa

Coping with the changing socio-economic environment and promoting self-reliance
presented by
Dr. Winsome Gordon,
Director, Primary Education Section, UNESCO, Paris

THE programme was launched in 1993 at the Pan African Conference on Education for All, and was reinforced by the Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing +5. It was consolidated in the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, and a global, inter-agency working group has been established which is involved in promoting and financing girls' education. Set against many challenges, the main objective is to assist education systems to respond better to the needs of girls, thus ensuring their security, optimal achievement, knowledge and an understanding of the social, economic and cultural dimensions that influence their lives.

■ *Implementation of the Guidance and Counselling Programme*
The programme covers 70 countries with Malawi as the headquarters;

79 core trainers have been trained through a cascade training model;

8,887 policy makers, teacher trainers, and youth and social workers, have been reached through local workshops;

16 training modules covering areas that concern girls and children orphaned by AIDS;

there is one module for policy makers;

22 videos and 22 booklets are available;

materials have been developed by African specialists;

international technical and financial aid;

the management of the programme is headed by a Board of Governors (Ministers of Education), who occasionally meet to review programmes and make decisions.

■ *Future orientation*
To institutionalize the programme and ensure sustainability;

establishment of the Regional Centre for Africa in Lilongwe, Malawi;

expansion of youth forums for orphans of HIV / AIDS;

improving the use of ICT for training and information;

strengthening partnerships;

establishing an African Association of Guidance and Counselling;

establishing monitoring and evaluation techniques for guidance and counselling;

regional intervention and national level implementation.

School feeding programme in India

Presented by
Dr. Minnie Mathew, Focal Point for Primary Education, United Nations World Food Programme

SCHOOL feeding programmes have existed in India since the 1950s.
■ *Objectives*
To provide nutrition and health care for all school-going children;

to provide a holistic approach to EFA;

to provide nutritional supplements for children who are mostly malnourished;

to make primary education more universal by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance.

■ *Implementation*
A midday meal is provided for all school children in the age group 5-14 years;

the Government of India covers commodity and transportation costs;

expenses for processing food is met by state governments;

money saved by the state government is invested in other aspects of primary education.

■ *Positive results*
100 million children have been covered by the programme;

school enrolment, particularly for girls, has remarkably improved;

attendance rates have increased and dropout rates decreased;

cooked meals contribute to increased enrolment – approximately 7.7 million children are provided with cooked meals on a daily basis, (the distribution of dry rations increased enrolment, but did not achieve increased attendance);

immunization of school children has been made more effective, as well as monitoring children's growth and provision of general health care.

■ *Future direction*
Greater provision of basic infrastructure, such as rooms for the preparation of meals;

in view of the high prevalence of micro-nutrient deficiencies in India, the use of micro-nutrient-fortified food is recommended;

feeding programmes should be combined with de-worming, vitamin A, and iron supplements and control of infections through improved school health programmes;

school feeding needs to be combined with an "education package" including uniforms, free textbooks and bus passes;

teachers should be involved in the supervision and monitoring of the midday meals;

need to target areas of low school attendance to help increase school enrolment;

governments need to increase resource allocation to states with the highest number of children out of school.

The changing role of the inspectorate

Presenter:
Professor (Mrs) K. Sujatha,
Senior Fellow and Head, International Unit and National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, Delhi, India

INSPECTION and supervision in India were introduced during British Rule and the system continued in the post-independence period.

It was essentially a system designed to control and maintain the status quo, characterized by fault-finding, ordering and creating fear, rather than encouraging new developments and seeking solutions to problems.

In spite of improvements, weaknesses in the system continue, due to insufficient and inadequately trained staff, poor access to remote areas, and lack of infrastructure for follow-up action.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPED), launched in 1994, has expanded to cover 15 states in India. It aims to set out a new role for the school inspectorate:

■ *Objectives*
To achieve the goal of universal access. To this end 41,000 Alternate Schools were established, many in previously unserved settlements;

to achieve 100 per cent enrolment, especially for girls, and disadvantaged groups such as "Scheduled Castes", and "Scheduled Tribes;"

to increase the retention rate;

to improve students' performance levels.

■ *Advantages of the programme arise from:*
Decentralization of planning and management to reflect local needs;

comprehensive planning;

bottom-up planning (starting with input from the village, then district, finally state level);

high degree of community participation, and ownership of school management (Village Education Committees monitor and manage the functioning of the school, and are involved in teacher management)

greater involvement of teachers;

inter-school support and sharing.

■ *Limitations result from:*

Good teachers being promoted to the level of inspectors, thus removing them from schools;

the lack of sustainability of resources and activities;

a degree of resistance to changes in the conventional system.

■ *Emerging tensions*
  are caused by:

Unrealistic expectations of the system;

tension between the old and new structures;

control and support functions.

■ *Characteristics of effective*
  inspection and supervision
  include:

Creative and innovative;

focus on staff development and guidance;

diagnostic and remedial approach;

a trusting atmosphere transparent and participatory;

liaison with the community;

supervision centres located nearer to schools.

Evaluating the Performance of Primary Education

Presenter: **Ms Helen Abadzi**, Operations Evaluation Department (OED), The World Bank

Ms Abadzi explained her work - which consists of assessing the completion of World Bank projects throughout the world.

Using statistical analysis she explained that the performance of primary education was generally low compared to sec-

ondary and tertiary education. On a qualitative level her observations confirmed this discouraging picture. Based on her limited experiences when visiting a few schools, often located in relatively convenient areas, she made several general conclusions, some of which are given below:

Governments frequently have priorities that appear to be misplaced – for example:

- emphasis is often placed on higher education;
- erection of new buildings is generally preferred to repairing existing ones;
- on the whole, little is done to enhance curriculum implementation in primary schools;
- more emphasis is placed on improving "high-stakes" examinations.

Learning the official language by poor children was still a problem in many countries. This was worsened by the high cost of textbooks – this is a major problem in Francophone Africa.

There is considerable disparity between levels of achievement in rural and urban communities.

Multigrade and double shift practices may be deficient.

Nutritional interventions are rare, such as school feeding, provision of micro-nutrient supplements, de-worming programmes.

Classroom interaction is poor, and teachers often use outmoded methods of delivery.

Limited attention is given to the affective domain.

Teachers are often not motivated due to low pay, and often due to the failure of the government to pay their salaries.

Urban teachers are often unwilling to work in rural areas.

Little supervision from inspectors who themselves may be bored and unmotivated.

Management of schools is poor.

There is the temptation to produce inflated figures, and data for enrolment statistics is often not verifiable.

On a more positive note: Ms Ababzi commented that there was clear, evidence that girls' education had improved, through the inputs of technical assistance partners' organizations and that the percentage of the budget allocated to primary education may have increased.

However, the essential evaluation question remained: "Are students learning information in such a way that they can later recall and use it when needed?"

■ *Evaluation*

Apart from academic achievement, the evaluation of education is often arbitrary. However, certain factors can be measured such as:

time on task;

quality of classroom interaction in terms of visible response of the pupils;

textbook availability and actual use.

■ *Recommendations*

- Better structuring of supervisory tasks, and setting finite and concrete goals for teachers and supervisors to achieve in class.

- Communities should spend more time monitoring teachers' and school quality rather than creating more buildings.

- Donors should reach consensus based on sound educational research.

Annexe 6.

Selected items from country reports

Benin
Quality Schooling

To encourage quality education, schools can apply for the title, "Ecole de Qualité Fondamental" – EQF (School of Fundamental Quality).

To earn this title the school establishment must satisfy the following criteria:

Be managed by a principal who has high moral values, who is conscientious, and whose performance demonstrates effective leadership;

Each class has a teacher who has high moral values, who is conscientious and whose performance is proved;

Provides an adequate standard of infrastructure suited to the needs of the students and teachers;

Provides adequate equipment and facilities for the students, designed to suit their needs and their level, which are properly maintained;

Provides sufficient teaching materials for their efficient use by pupils, ensuring girls are equally well-provided;

Respects for the school calendar, ensuring that staff and students attend regularly, and carry out designated school activities;

Cooperates effectively and productively with parents and community;

Ensures the academic and social achievement of the students (girls and boys), through an efficient organization of teaching and learning activities;

Applies the values of Benin schools, and creates the foundation for the development of future citizens capable of responding to the challenges of today's world;

Values the most commendable efforts, (such as talents, skills, personal qualities), among the students, teachers, and those in positions of responsibility.

Egypt:
Teaching English
as a Foreign Language

The Primary school age is ideal for developing fundamental skills in learning a new language. This helps to prepare children for more demanding tasks in the later stages. Recognizing that learning a new language at school can be potentially tedious or intimidating, the objectives of teaching English in the primary cycle in Egypt are intended to familiarize the pupils with the language in a stress-free and fun-loaded atmosphere. Creative and practical activities have been designed, where children learn to communicate in English through play, mime, song, puzzles and riddles. Well-designed audio and visual aids are recommended for use by teachers, to help make their subject more relevant and enjoyable.

Ghana
Involving stakeholders
at the school level

The government of Ghana has been largely successful in decentralizing the control of education. In Ghana the school belongs to the community. The community is supported by a number of other recognised partners and stakeholders in the delivery of educational services. These include school-level stakeholders and district-level stakeholders.

For example, among the school-level stakeholders are the following bodies:

■ *The School Management Committee (SMC)*

Among other functions this serves to control the general policy of the school and develops a yearly education action plan for the improvement of teaching and learning in the school.

■ *The Parent/Teacher Association (PTA)*

This aims to establish good relationships between parents and teachers, to ensure cooperation between the home and the school in order to promote quality education for the child.

■ *The Unit Committee*

This is a local government structure which aims to collaborate with the SMCs and PTAs to achieve some of their objectives

The role of the Headteacher is particularly important in schools in Ghana:

- He is responsible to the SMC for the academic, social and internal organization and conduct of the school.

- He arranges the curriculum and syllabus of the school.

- He is responsible for fostering and maintaining a "high moral tone and ideal" service in the school, and for the maintenance of discipline.

Lesotho
Increasing access
to schooling

THE Education for All assessment undertaken in 1998/99 showed that only 63 per cent of school-aged children

enrolled in schools, due to several factors, including:

Poverty (30 per cent of the population are below the poverty level)

Large distances that children have to travel, over poor, unsafe terrain

Boys are encouraged to work rather than go to school

Girls are not re-admitted if they become pregnant

Lesotho's Free Universal Primary Education for All Policy, which aims to overcome some of these problems in the following ways:

A school feeding programme is being developed

Improved teacher training and curriculum development

Promoting distance education as a vehicle for teaching and learning, especially for teacher training (22 per cent of the teaching force is currently unqualified)

The Department of Education has recognized the importance of primary education, and has been shifting some of its spending from tertiary to primary level.

Liberia
Programme for
girls' education

SEVERAL innovative programmes have been recently initiated, including:

■ *Programme for Girls' Education (FAWE)* established by the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Kandokai, this programme aims to reduce the high illiteracy rate of

women in Liberia. Girls are actively encouraged and assisted to attend academic/vocational institutes. The enrolment rate at the institutes has increased.

■ *Assisted Enrolment Programme* The government pays 50 per cent of the tuition fees for students in all public schools. This has significantly increased enrolment.

■ *Mass Literacy Programme:* Each one teach one
This is intended to reduce the high illiteracy rate in Liberia. Each educated Liberian is encouraged to teach one illiterate person to read and write. This programme is very popular with the general public.

■ *Crash Teacher Training Programme:*
The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF and IRC has introduced this programme in a number of teacher training institutes since 1998, in order to address the problem of the lack of teachers. Teachers are trained for ten weeks in priority subjects. Those who successfully complete the training are awarded "C" certificates. More than 1,000 teachers have been trained in this way.

Mozamibque
Curriculum Reform Process
for Basic Education

THIS includes among other objectives:
Promoting female participation
Gender units at all levels have been established to make parents

and community leaders aware of the importance of the education of girls. Increased employment and the training of female teachers aim to increase female participation.

■ *Capacity building*
This component recognizes the role of the school (including management, organization, discipline, quality of teachers) for effective learning, and subsequent success.

Niger
Facing the Challenges:
The ten-year programme for educational development

COVERING an area of over one million square kilometres of mostly arid Saharan desert, and with ten million inhabitants, Niger faces many economic, social and cultural problems which directly affect education:

Drought occurs regularly, there is progressive desertification, a lack of availability of resources, poor infrastructure, especially in terms of transport, and poverty affecting 63 per cent of the population, to name a few.

Adequate natural and human resources do exist, but the lack of skilled workers and qualified professionals limits the country's potential.

Economically the country is in serious decline.

The population is increasing at a rate of 3.3 per cent per annum. The fertility rate is an average 7.5 children per woman. With a life expectancy of approximately 48 years, nearly half the

population is younger than 15 years of age. This in itself creates huge social and economic demands on the country in terms of health, education and nutrition.

The rate of adult illiteracy is high, at 80 per cent. Only 34 per cent of children attend primary school. There is a wide gender disparity - significantly fewer girls than boys attend school. There are large differences between regions (ranging from 99 per cent attendance to less than 24 per cent), and between urban and rural areas (average 51 per cent and 28 per cent respectively).

There are also challenges connected with language. The vast majority of schools use French as their teaching medium, whilst some are bilingual (French/Arabic and a few use French/local language).

Statistics for teacher training show a steady decline in numbers, and an increase in the student-teacher ratio. Many teachers are unmotivated.

School curricula are not relevant to social, economic and cultural realities, and do not adequately prepare students for future employment. The demand for education is far greater than the supply.

Added to these factors there are serious financial constraints, in the education system, and management at all levels tends to be inefficient.

■ *Koranic schools*
In Niger Koranic schools provide a different type of education, and have been separately administered. These were the first educational institutions known in the country, established when Islam

was introduced to the region in the tenth century. They enjoyed considerable prestige in the community, and were built throughout the country, drawing in both children and adults. There are few reliable statistics for these schools. However in 2000 the number of Koranic Schools was estimated at 51,690, with a total of 878,730 students (with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls).

In spite of its popularity, traditional Koranic education has many inadequacies, including:

Students are inadequately prepared for productive work, as insufficient emphasis is given to practical and scientific subjects

Poor organization and management due to lack of external assistance

Poor teacher training

Lack of an official curriculum for Koranic schools

Lack of rigorous inspection and evaluation

The State of Niger, aware that Koranic schools contribute significantly to the level of school attendance, has committed itself to restructuring the system of Koranic Education, making it more relevant to students' needs, and more efficiently administered.

■ *Responding*
to the challenges
Against this discouraging background the Government of Niger, through its Ministry of Education, has embarked on radical educational reforms, and has developed a ten-year programme for educational development, in order to achieve, among others, the following general objectives:

To ensure access to primary education for the maximum number of children, especially in rural areas.

To improve resource management at the primary level.

To improve the quality, relevance of learning, and efficiency of management

In general the school needs to be re-modelled to respond to the children's needs: to encourage them to study well and to prepare them for community life.

The ten-year programme will focus on two main areas of action: access for all children, and the relevance and quality of education.

■ *Aims:*

To raise the rate of attendance from 34 per cent in 2001 to 70 per cent by 2010.

To raise the rate of attendance in the rural areas from 28 per cent to 65 per cent by 2011.

To bring the average rate of attendance of girls from 27 per cent to 68 per cent by 2011.

To promote the attendance of handicapped children.

To improve the management of human and material resources.

To improve learning conditions in multigrade classes.

To improve the internal efficiency of schools by reducing the rate of repetition and withdrawal (from 13 per cent to 5 per cent, and from 9.3 per cent to 4 per cent respectively).

To improve the training of teachers and improve their conditions of employment

■ *To achieve these aims*
the following strategies are being implemented:
- Increasing public awareness to give schooling a higher priority;
- Decentralizing school management whilst developing partnerships (between the state, community, development partners, and other organizations).

In spite of all the challenges facing primary education in Niger, the outlook is increasingly hopeful. A major reason is that the private sector and other sponsors and partners have shown their readiness to assist in a number of areas.

In conclusion, the recent major reforms in the education policy in Niger, and particularly the restructuring of the administration through decentralization, is encouraging greater community participation in school management and school affairs.

It is predicted that this will serve to integrate the children better into society and their environment, which in turn will have the effect of increasing the school attendance rate. The success of the ten-year plan will largely depend on the will of the parents to take greater responsibility for their children's education, according to the often-used slogan:

"L'Ecole pour tous et par tous" (a school for all and by all)