Uganda: Adjustment Operations in Support of Education

In a bold effort to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2000, the Government of Uganda decided in 1996 to remove primary school fees for up to four children in each family (of whom two should be girls). The World Bank supported this effort through a Education Sector Adjustment Credit and Grant (ESAC). The ESAC was designed to assist the government deal with the immediate challenges arising from the UPE policy. The broad development objective of ESAC was to ensure that the public resources needed to sustain UPE were available and that there was improved allocation and more efficient use of these resources. In addition and critically for the Bank the operation was designed to enhance the availability of quality inputs and improve overall sector management.

Impact on the ground

Access to education

Access. From 3.4 million children in 1996, the total enrollment is over 7.0 million in 2002

Access by the poor and girls to education. In 1992 only 51.1 percent of the poorest quintile were enrolled (compared to 82.1 in the highest). In 1999, this had increased to 83.7 percent (compared to 85.1 for the highest quintile). During that period, the share of girls within the lowest quintile increased from 46.1 percent to 82.0 percent.

Improved allocation of resources.

Protection of support for primary education. As a share of total government recurrent expenditure, primary education doubled from 11 percent to 22 percent between 1995 and 2000. During the same period, education's share of the overall recurrent budget also increased from 22 percent to 32 percent.

Financial transfers to schools. In addition, government transferred about 20 percent of its total education budget to schools through a capitation grant intended to support teaching materials and school administration.

Improved efficiency in resource use

Teachers. From a virtual standstill in 1997, new teachers are now being recruited at a rate of over 1,000 each month and the target pupil to teacher ratio of 40:1 will probably be achieved by 2004. In addition, teachers salaries were maintained in real terms and management of the payroll improved considerably.

Classrooms. ESAC supported a much improved community-based decentralized construction method which is producing 8,000 classrooms annually at about half the cost of the central contracting approach and the pupil to classroom ratio is now back to pre-UPE levels.
**Improved sector management**

Broad transparent planning and reporting mechanisms. ESAC supported government’s efforts to lead UPE. Government established six-monthly education reviews bringing together all of the key Ministries of Government, representatives from Parliament, NGOs, education officials at District and Central levels, as well as donors. The reviews discuss progress made and future financing plans. Six agencies are now providing budget support to education in Uganda.

Establishment of an education management information system. A demand-driven system was designed with inputs from all stakeholders. District officials were trained in its use and the first reports produced in 2000.

Increased accountability for public funds. A study prior to UPE indicated that only about 26 percent of direct government resources actually reached schools in time. The Ministry of Finance began to publish of all education-related transfers to districts; the Districts listed individual schools and amounts received Schools publicly displayed the amounts received and the utilization of those amounts. A study in 2000 found that the amount reaching schools had increased to over 90 percent.

**Protecting quality**

Teachers. A teacher development and management system was supported and extended offering teachers timely demand-driven in-service training. The system also provided opportunities to upgrade qualifications and over 10,000 teachers have done so. Partly as a consequence, the share of untrained teachers within the teaching force has declined by 10 percent.

Textbooks. The actual allocation for textbooks exceeded the commitment. In addition, the school capitation grant guidelines specified that about 25 percent should be spent on instructional materials.

National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE). Government also measured achievement in the four key subjects testing a representative sample of primary pupils. Unsurprisingly, the immediate post-UPE results show some decline. However, results of tests in 2001 are expected to showed improvement and the national dissemination of results will impact awareness and benefit quality.

**Lessons learned**

Budget support can be an effective instrument to support accelerated education development. Budget support for education should be linked to agreements that are framed within a robust budget framework, grounded in a long-term sector policy and financial plan, consistent with PRSP targets, incorporated in the medium-term budget framework and, ideally, implemented within a participatory education review process.

Strong and sustained government ownership is key. There was political commitment to UPE throughout government: the Ministry of Finance viewed UPE as the highest priority within the Poverty Eradication Action Plan and protected the necessary allocations, while the Ministries of Local Government and Public Service were critical in resolving teacher problems.

A sector-wide approach with transparent inclusive and complete reporting is a promising approach. Government and financing agencies worked together within an agreed policy framework and government benefited from donor views on aspects of education development. The transparent and inclusive reporting system of the government and the Education Sector Reviews helped to stimulate donor confidence and increased funds through budget.

Policy development is a flexible process. In Uganda, the massive increase in numbers was not anticipated, nor was the continued enrollment of overage pupils. Closing teachers’ salary arrears, recruitment and timely payment were more complex than anticipated. The Education Sector Reviews helped to make resources available to analyze problems and follow up on suggested solutions.

“Big Bang” approaches to education expansion will have a negative impact on quality and policy approaches must be flexible. The inability of government to increase teacher numbers, classrooms and textbooks in proportion to new enrollments had a deleterious impact on quality. However, the continued commitment of government combined with the maintenance of external support is addressing this issue.

This article was written by Patrick D. Murphy, Lead Education Specialist, Africa Region, World Bank. For more information, e-mail Pmurphy@worldbank.org