A Chance to Learn
Knowledge and Finance for
Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

February 2001
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Education and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Sector-Wide Approaches

Adult Literacy Programs in Uganda
A Chance to Learn
Knowledge and Finance for
Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sector Assistance Strategy
Regional Human Development Family
Africa Region
World Bank
The requirement for faster development of the new nations in Africa . . . is more education and training at all levels—a more generally literate working force, more skilled artisans, more members of the learned professions, more entrepreneurs, more skilled government administrators. Until the human resources of the new African nations are more fully developed—and no huge injection of money can greatly accelerate that process—the opportunities for the wise and effective utilization of foreign investment will necessarily remain limited.

—Eugene Black, President of the World Bank, 1949–62
Address to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1960

All agree that the single most important key to development and to poverty alleviation is education. This must start with universal primary education for girls and boys equally, as well as an open and competitive system of secondary and tertiary education. . . . Adult education, literacy, and lifelong learning must be combined with the fundamental recognition that education of women and girls is central to the process of development . . . pre-school education must be given its full weight . . . developments in science and technology and knowledge transfer offer a unique possibility to countries to catch up with more technologically advanced ones.

—James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, 1995–present
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Foreword

Whether Africa can indeed “claim the 21st century,” as a recent report (World Bank 2000b) proposes, will depend largely on the effectiveness of its investment in education. Progress toward better governance, more effective conflict resolution, increased competitiveness, reduced fertility, improved health—including fewer people with HIV/AIDS—and most important, accelerated poverty reduction is intimately related to progress in education and training of Africa’s children and adults.

Clearly, Africa will not be able to sustain rapid growth without investing in the education of its people. Many lack the education to contribute to—and benefit from—fast economic growth. Yet in many countries in the region education development has stagnated in the past two decades. Unabated growth of the school-age population, severe constraints on public resources, and policy reforms that too often were too little and too late, contributed to a widening education gap between Africa and the rest of the world. Almost 40 percent of the population is illiterate. Enrollments at all levels are lower than on any other continent. Many children complete school without mastering the knowledge and skills prescribed in the curriculum. Few schools prepare students for an economy dominated by information and communication technologies. And most tertiary institutions are isolated from international knowledge networks. Ensuring that no child is denied access to school because of her or his inability to pay remains a distant goal in many countries.

Reversing these trends will not be easy. The challenge will require a major effort by Africans and their development partners over a long period—often a decade or more. Many governments will need to implement changes—often politically controversial changes—in the way education is financed and managed. Governments, civil society, and external funding agencies will need to establish or reconfigure partnerships to ensure national ownership and sustainability of innovation and reform programs.

The World Bank has a long record of supporting education development in Africa. But the impact of our assistance has often been less than expected. Given the critical contribution of education to accelerated growth and development in Africa, we have in the past two years carried out an internal process of analysis, reflection, and discussion on the impact of our assistance in this sector. In addition, we have consulted with representatives of African governments, civil society, and UN agencies on how to become more effective as a partner in education development in Africa.

This report is the product of these processes. It argues that there is a strong case for the Bank to expand and broaden its support for education development in Africa. This implies continued and sustained support for basic education development. But it also implies expanding our support for the other education subsectors, especially higher education. The report also makes it clear that such an expanded program only makes sense if we step up our efforts to address the central issues of quality, equity, capacity, and sustainability. Because we cannot do this alone, we are deeply committed to working in government-led partnerships for accelerated education development.

At the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000, World Bank President James Wolfensohn reaffirmed the readiness of the Bank to work with governments and other development partners to accelerate progress toward the Education for All goals. He pledged that the Bank would make every effort to ensure that no country with a credible plan will be unable to implement it because of lack of external support. This commitment will govern our support for basic education in the next decade. At the same time we are equally committed to providing assistance to ensure that students graduating from secondary schools, vocational training programs, and universities have the skills and scientific and technical knowledge to enter the 21st
century’s world of work. Regional cooperation will often be essential to accelerated progress in many of these areas. We intend to develop instruments that will allow us to support regional programs more effectively.

At the cusp of the 21st century the opportunity to address the often intractable problems of education in Sub-Saharan Africa are perhaps better than at any time in the past two decades. Growth has resumed in many countries. The political commitment to education development is strong almost everywhere. The rising tide of democracy has created a more favorable environment for the participation of civil society and communities in policy formulation and program implementation.

Information and communication technology offer new opportunities to overcome constraints of distance and time.

And there is more. For several countries additional resources will become available under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief initiative. Many funding agencies are committed to increasing their support for education in Africa. New aid relationships are being piloted in the context of sector development programs. I expect this report to set the stage for rapidly accelerating Bank support for education development in this new environment.

Callisto Madavo
Vice-President Africa Region
Preface

The World Bank’s Africa Region first outlined its views on education development in Africa in the 1988 paper, “Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion” (World Bank 1988). The paper challenged African countries to formulate comprehensive and coherent education development programs with balanced policies for adjustment, revitalization, and selective expansion. Several countries moved in this direction. In a few, financial adjustment policies set the stage for better quality, sustained progress toward universal primary education, and selective expansion at higher levels. Yet in many countries progress in revitalizing their education systems was disappointing.

In six African countries—Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Somalia—less than half the school-age population is enrolled in primary school. In 20 countries more than one-half of women are illiterate. Low levels of learning persist throughout the region. The potential of distance education programs has yet to be tapped. Many vocational and technical programs remain inefficient. And the quality of research and post-graduate training has not improved.

Analysis, dialogue, and internal consultation often have taken much longer than anticipated. Still, a growing number of countries are formulating policies to address the issues raised in the 1988 paper—and to respond to the challenges of the Jomtien Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (1990), the targets of the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at World Education Forum (2000). More than 40 African governments have prepared action plans to achieve education for all, and at least six countries are piloting sectorwide approaches to education development.

Since 1988 donors have spent considerable time reassessing aid priorities and procedures. Most have now completed this process and are exploring ways to collaborate more effectively with one another, with governments, and with civil society to support education development in Africa. The prospects for education development may be better now than at any other time in the past decade. Since 1995 economic growth has resumed in many Sub-Saharan African countries. Since 1994 the primary gross enrollment ratio has increased, and recent data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics suggest that the trend may be accelerating. At the World Education Forum in April 2000 countries confirmed their commitment to the goal of universal primary education by 2015. Accelerated debt relief and more education aid can help mobilize the necessary resources.

The policy dialogue since 1988 has been a model of effective donor-government partnerships. The dialogue was initially coordinated by the informal group Donors to African Education, which has since become the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Members include all African ministers of education and 17 donors. Its objective is to provide a forum in which the ministers can lead the discussion with donors on key education issues and on the need to adapt external aid policies to national needs. Eleven thematic working groups study and report on areas of broad interest. ADEA reviewed progress in education in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1988 through a participatory process based on country studies and the active involvement of African education specialists and policymakers. The result of this process, the “Prospective, Stocktaking Review of Education in Africa,” was presented at ADEA’s biannual meeting in Johannesburg in December 1999.

The World Bank has actively supported the ADEA-led assessment and is a member of the steering committee established to manage it. In addition, the Bank’s Africa Region Education Family has reflected on its nonlending experiences and on ways to increase the effectiveness of its lending and nonlending support. The first draft of a discussion paper was prepared and discussed in 1998 with senior education officials from Africa as well as
other stakeholders. In October 1999 a second consultation was held in Paris with African ministers and policymakers as well as members of civil society organizations. Both consultations were funded by the Norwegian Education Trust Fund. The findings of the ADEA assessment contributed significantly to this process, and a number of case studies enrich this document.

This report is intended primarily to propose a strategy and a program of action for the Africa Region of the World Bank as it strives to support countries in their efforts to accelerate education development. It incorporates much of the advice provided in these consultations. The authors summarize the challenges facing education development in Africa, suggest key elements of country responses, discuss the implications of these responses for the Bank, and propose actions for making the Bank a more effective partner for education development in Africa.
Executive Summary

In the knowledge-based global economy of the coming decades, education will be the cornerstone of broad-based economic growth and poverty reduction—providing the means for people to confront new development challenges and improve their lives. Without major advances in education, Africa will not be able to take advantage of trade and development opportunities in a technology-driven and rapidly integrating world economy. Education is also the most important investment for making progress toward the international social development goals adopted by the world’s governments for 2015. Without rapid and substantial improvements in education access and quality in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 40 percent of people struggle to survive on less than $1 a day, broader poverty reduction efforts will be blunted.

African Education Trends

The education development record in Africa since 1988 has been disappointing. Several countries—including Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe—sustained progress in the 1980s and 1990s. Others have initiated promising long-term programs of reform and development. But the reality for too many Africans is an education system characterized by low quality and limited access.

For the region as a whole, progress has largely stalled since 1990, failing to reverse the setbacks of the 1980s. Every level has too few education facilities, and those that exist are often in poor repair and inadequately equipped. Teachers, often underpaid and underqualified, rarely receive the support and supervision they need to be effective. The annual number of hours spent in the classroom by most African students is far below international standards. Instructional materials are often in desperately short supply. It is not surprising that learning achievement is limited.

This record is especially disturbing when set against other regions. Africa has the lowest enrollment rate at every level, and it is the only region where the numbers of children out of school are continuing to rise. The average African adult has fewer than three years of schooling, lower than the attainment for any other region. There are also growing education inequalities within Africa between income groups and between urban and rural populations. Poor children, especially those in rural areas, are the most disadvantaged in education access and quality.

Education trends have a direct bearing on poverty reduction efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa's share of global poverty since 1987 has risen, and a growing proportion of Africans cannot meet their basic needs. More than 240 million people live on less than $1 a day. With its rapidly growing population, the region needs 5 percent annual growth to keep the number of poor from rising. Halving the incidence of poverty by 2015 will require annual per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth of at least 7 percent—unlikely, without accelerated progress at all levels of the education system.

Without a quantum leap in education at the national level, Africa will miss the 2015 target of universal primary education by a margin of 55 million children. Enrollment trends since the Jomtien conference in 1990 indicate that in 2015 Africa will account for 15 percent of the world's primary school-age children, but 75 percent of children not in school.

Failing to extend the benefits of education development to the poor is thus likely to prove highly costly—economically, socially, and politically. Accelerating education development in Africa therefore needs to be part of broader poverty reduction and rural development strategies. There are plenty of examples of educational successes and promising innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa to
show what can be achieved if countries show a genuine commitment to education development.

**The African development context**

The broad development context for African education has changed dramatically in the past decade. Most important, economic performance has improved markedly since 1995, with consecutive years of per capita growth in many countries for the first time since the 1970s.

- In some countries, such as Uganda, growth is beginning to provide the resources needed to expand education opportunities.
- Many countries can expect significant additional national resources for education development as debt relief is granted under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program.
- While conflicts have devastated the economies of several countries, many others are steadily moving toward better governance and participatory democracy.

These changes make the prospects for accelerating education development better than at perhaps any time in the past decade. And at the World Education Forum in Dakar, the 185 participating countries adopted a Framework for Action toward the 2015 goal of Education for All, giving special attention to the needs of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Even so, the region faces daunting development challenges. Poverty, pervasive across the region, is a barrier to expanding education access and improving learning outcomes. Waste in the public sector and weak governance structures continue to hold back many countries and urgently require reform. Unsustainable external debt has diverted scarce resources from priority social needs—at a heavy cost for the poor. This is why the resources freed through the HIPC initiative have to be genuinely additional and directed toward meeting the needs of the poor.

Africa cannot sustain any of the necessary investments in education and infrastructure unless it can meet three other key development challenges—ending extensive armed conflict, reversing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and reducing fertility rates. Recent conflict in Africa has caused massive human and economic devastation. At least one African in five lives in a country severely disrupted by war. Between 1990 and 1994 more than 1 million people died because of conflict. In 1998 more than 20 million Africans were either refugees or displaced. Restoring peace and stability in the region is thus an urgent priority.

Africa has also been the region hardest hit by AIDS, which has evolved from a health issue into a development issue. By killing people in their most productive years, the pandemic is destroying the social and economic fabric of countries. Reversing hard-won human development gains, replacing education sector staff lost to AIDS-related illnesses, providing education to AIDS orphans, and integrating AIDS education into school programs are urgent challenges.

Meanwhile, rapid population growth consistently frustrates efforts to achieve universal primary education. Notwithstanding the impact of AIDS, Africa’s population will continue to grow rapidly by international standards. Its dependency ratio is the highest in the world, placing an unusually heavy burden both on the public purse and on households. Africa must face all these challenges to move forward and create education systems that meet the needs of the 21st century.

**Country responses**

Given the development challenges facing Africa and the widespread failure of current approaches in the education sector to deliver the desired results, national governments must respond clearly and decisively. The national education challenge has four main dimensions:

- Creating a framework for reform.
- Identifying strategic priorities.
Developing investment programs. Acting selectively based on a few clear principles. What do these four dimensions mean for governments? First, creating a framework for reform requires bold policies, sustained over time and implemented in broad partnership with civil society and with donors. The reforms need to be framed in a sectorwide perspective that promotes balanced development of education and considers the linkages between different parts of the system. The challenge is to develop local solutions to financial, educational, and institutional issues—all informed by international experience.

Second, because Africa has such a diversity of contexts, the process of identifying strategic priorities will have to be country specific. But to achieve a quantum leap in education development, any country’s priority objectives must include an increase in the educational attainment of the labor force through universal primary education—and a gradual expansion of access to the full education cycle. Two other key priorities are especially important now that the world of work is increasingly dominated by information and communication technologies: enhancing vocational and technical skills, and strengthening post-primary science, mathematics, and technology.

Third, designing investment programs to make this happen will often require fundamental changes in the management and financing of education systems:

- Exploring alternatives to existing service delivery approaches that are currently based on assumptions inappropriate in much of Africa.
- Moving planning and resource allocation in many cases from central ministries to local offices and community organizations.
- Allocating adequate resources to nonsalary needs.
- Sharing responsibility for the financing and provision of schooling strategically among governments, private providers, parents, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Fourth, acting selectively to make a quantum leap in education development will be achieved and sustained only where efforts are underpinned by genuine commitment to a clear set of guiding principles:

- A relentless pursuit of quality. Without this, expanded educational opportunities are unlikely to achieve their purpose—imparting useful knowledge, reasoning abilities, skills, and values.
- An unwavering commitment to equity. This is vital to ensure that disadvantaged groups—especially rural residents, the poor, and females—have equal access to learning opportunities at all levels. This will demand explicitly targeted strategies for hard-to-reach groups and better analysis of the mechanisms that exclude people from education.
- A willingness to make tough choices to ensure financial sustainability. African countries need to ensure that education development strategies are financially sustainable. Tough decisions are needed in setting spending priorities, spending effectively the resources that have been allocated, diversifying funding sources, and in many cases mobilizing additional funding. Once made, these decisions will have to be adhered to.
- An up-front emphasis on institutional strengthening. Effective planning, implementation, and evaluation of reforms depend on effective incentives, reasonable rules, efficient organizational structures, and competent staff. Without them, no strategy for education development can succeed.

The agenda for reform and progress is challenging. Yet the emergence of new technologies is creating opportunities for African education to move forward in ways that only a decade ago could not be imagined. The extent to which Africa will be able to take advantage of these new opportunities to participate in the global knowledge economy will depend on the capacity of its education systems to harness the potential of information and communication technologies.
But the process of identifying priorities and designing and implementing reforms must be country led if it is to succeed. National direction and ownership is widely recognized as a key ingredient of successful implementation.

Much is already under way. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mozambique, Senegal, and Uganda have all initiated promising long-term programs of reform and development at the primary level. Uganda has also implemented far-reaching changes in higher education. Several South African Development Community countries are piloting reforms in secondary education and in math and science teaching. Madagascar and Zambia are planning radical reforms in the way vocational and technical education are financed and managed. South Africa has formulated a comprehensive nine-point program for sector reform. Such efforts derive from a recognition that without equitable, high-quality, and efficient education systems, Africa cannot meet the development challenges of the 21st century.

New technologies are creating opportunities for African education to move forward in ways unimaginable only a decade ago. The extent to which education systems prepare the students for participation in an economy increasingly dependent on electronic information and communication technologies will be a key factor in the ability of African countries to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new global economy.

The World Bank's response

Supporting accelerated education development in Africa is pivotal to the World Bank mission of eliminating poverty. The Bank has two comparative advantages for education sector development: a strong macroeconomic and public expenditure perspective and an unusual depth and breadth of international knowledge and expertise.

Even so, the scope and effectiveness of World Bank support often have been limited. Lending commitments have stabilized at a lower level than is consistent with the institutional commitment to eliminating poverty. The need to balance the development of different levels of the education system has not always been observed. Policy recommendations have often rested on weak analytical foundations. The linkages to broader poverty reduction efforts have not been well developed. And too few interventions have generated sustainable institutional benefits.

Bank evaluations clearly show the limited impact of many past investments and emphasize the need to learn from these experiences—at a time when there are strong calls on donors to contribute to broad-based country-led partnerships for education development. Democracy has created a space for stakeholder dialogue on education reform, and several countries have either sustained reforms or embarked on promising new programs. At the same time, donors are learning to work more closely with government, with each other, and with civil society, in pursuit of common objectives. The development of sectorwide programs in particular is an encouraging new approach.

To grasp these new opportunities, the Bank must do more—and it must do it better. Becoming a more effective partner involves both pursuing a strategy and identifying specific goals. The Bank’s strategy should give priority to encouraging innovation and change and exploiting its comparative advantage. The Bank can be an effective lender only if it increases the effectiveness of its nonlending services, by sharing its knowledge and by recognizing and promoting local capacity for sound analysis and planning. The strategy should also emphasize the Bank’s key institutional priorities for the education sector: equitable access for the poor, especially girls; broadening the portfolio to include combating HIV/AIDS as a central element in the Bank’s assistance; and improving the quality of provision measured by learning achievement and sustainable financing. All this requires that education investments be designed as an integral part of overall poverty reduction programs. So education sector
staff will have to work in a more integrated way across sectors.

In pursuing this strategy, the Bank needs to:

- Provide comprehensive support for sector development priorities at the national level.
- Improve portfolio performance.

The Bank’s support will increasingly be designed to promote the balanced development of the entire sector and consider the linkages between all parts of the education system—from early childhood to postgraduate programs. Investment priorities will reflect that universal primary education is necessary for meeting national social and economic development goals. They will also recognize the importance of gradual and selective expansion beyond the primary level. Policies and targets supported by these investments will be highly country specific, reflecting a political consensus on priorities and trade-offs based on human and financial resources, development objectives, labor market signals, and the demands of society.

Better portfolio performance will require action in five areas:

- Improving lending development.
- Promoting partnerships.
- Matching support strategies to country conditions.
- Applying state-of-the-art knowledge.
- Enhancing staff skills.

Improving the lending development process will require a focus on helping countries implement the policy reforms they have identified. With more than 40 potential borrowers, the Bank needs to respond to a range of development situations and develop lending strategies to match. Improving lending development will also require more nonlending services and clear standards at entry. Also crucial is greater flexibility in applying Bank policies and procedures, enabling the Bank to be more responsive to the new program priorities of budget support, decentralized implementation, and community involvement. In particular, the Bank will need to support programs that include recurrent expenditures such as teachers’ salaries.

Promoting long-term partnerships with government and civil society will require a sector specialist in the field office of every country where the Bank has a significant involvement in the education sector. This is a challenge in Africa, where many countries are small and operations are often adversely affected by economic and political instability.

Matching support strategies to country conditions requires a more flexible and responsive Bank. Where the conditions exist for success, it could provide large-scale budget support for education development. Where policy environments are weak, it could support reform with small, specific investment loans. Bank operations should provide enough assistance and incentives to countries emerging from conflict to allow them to develop as quickly as possible the conditions for viable sector development programs.

Many needed reforms and innovations can be more effective in cooperation with neighboring countries facing similar problems. This cooperation will allow programs to exploit economies of scale, recruit students from a much larger pool of candidates, and learn from implementation in different settings. To support regional or subregional programs effectively, the Bank will need to develop instruments that fit the specific requirements of these programs.

The Bank can only meet these challenges by applying state-of-the-art knowledge to its operations, something that clients demand and are entitled to. Knowledge can be effective if it is underpinned by sector analysis of economic, financial, educational, and institutional issues. Technical solutions must be based on local conditions and reflect local knowledge, while incorporating international experience. Indeed, far greater priority should go to strengthening country capacity to develop and apply new knowledge.

To align its staffing with the new sector strategy, the Bank will assemble an appropriate mix of economists, education specialists, and staff with specialized skills in areas such as institutional analysis and implementation. The strategy also requires a good mix of experienced staff and
younger staff eager to experiment and innovate. Increasing technical and operational knowledge about education in Africa is central to the success of the proposed action program. Achieving this goal will require intensifying efforts in the region to hire staff—from inside and outside the Bank—ranging from top-quality, experienced staff to promising young talent. It will also require making explicit arrangements with senior staff to mentor and coach less experienced colleagues—and implementing an Africa-specific staff development program.

None of these goals will be achieved unless the Bank becomes at once more comprehensive in its analysis and more selective in its approach. The Bank needs greater selectivity in the context of increased dialogue and partnership with governments and with other development actors the Bank is less accustomed to working with. Experience shows that education for all can be achieved and sustained only where governments, donors, and civil society work collectively toward shared priorities. The Dakar World Education Forum and the Social Summit injected new urgency into collective efforts to achieve education for all. The Bank is determined to grasp this opportunity. It will provide the maximum possible contribution to achieving universal primary education in Africa by 2015 while stepping up support for broader development of the education sector.
1. African Education on the Threshold of the 21st Century

The World Bank's Africa Region comprises the 41 countries (Djibouti is part of the Middle East and North Africa Region) on the continent south of the Sahara and the six island nations close to it. Africa's rich cultural and ethnic traditions reflect different heritages in all countries—an early Christian heritage in the Nile Basin, a strong Islamic influence in the north, and Christian influences dating from colonialism in many central and southern African countries. Each island nation has also developed its own culture.

Geographically and economically, Africa is diverse and fragmented. In 1998 the region's population was about 630 million, with two-thirds in rural areas. Seven countries have fewer than 1 million people. Nigeria has 120 million and Ethiopia 60 million. Within the continent communications and travel are difficult, and internal trade is limited. GNP per capita averaged $488 in 1998, ranging from about $100 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Mozambique to more than $2,800 in Botswana, Gabon, Mauritius, and South Africa. On the whole, the region's GNP growth and human development have lagged behind those of other regions, especially since 1980.

Despite gains in the second half of the 1990s, Sub-Saharan Africa enters the 21st century with many of the world's poorest countries. Can it rise to the challenges of this new century? The answer will depend largely on the scope and effectiveness of investments in education. Decades of research and experience in Africa and elsewhere have shown the pivotal role of a well-educated population in initiating, sustaining, and accelerating social and economic development. Education development is unquestionably of crucial importance for Africa.

Every country in the world recognizes basic education as a fundamental human right. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by every nation except Somalia and the United States, recognizes children's right to education and requires signatories to provide free compulsory basic education. Education is also the cornerstone of development and the foundation of economic competitiveness and social well-being. Numerous studies show that education, particularly primary education, has a significant positive impact on economic growth (Barro 1991; Lau, Jamison, and Louat 1991; Nehru and Dhareswar 1994), earnings (Psacharopoulos 1985), and productivity (Lockheed, Jamison, and Lau 1980). By increasing the value and efficiency of labor, education helps raise the poor from poverty. By increasing the overall productivity and intellectual flexibility of the labor force, it helps ensure a country's competitiveness in world markets.

Almost all the newly industrialized economies that have experienced dramatic growth in the past 25 years—such as Hong Kong, China, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore—achieved universal or near-universal primary education by 1965. This helped increase productivity and laid the foundation for an equitable distribution of the benefits of rapid growth. In contrast, countries with uneducated populations cannot expect to increase incomes and well-being (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; World Bank 1990, 1999a). Education is thus intertwined inextricably with economic development. It is both a source and a consequence of development, for economic growth provides the resources to expand education opportunities.

Primary education cannot expand and economies cannot grow without an education system that trains a large number of students beyond the basic cycle, including graduate students at universities. To be sustainable, education development must be balanced. It must ensure that systems produce students at different levels with qualifications that respond to the demand of the labor market, producing a continuous supply of skilled workers, technicians, professionals, managers, and leaders.
In addition to its economic returns, education—particularly of girls—has a positive impact on a variety of nonwage activities that increase household welfare. For example, the schooling of girls alters behavior in ways that later reduce fertility and infant and child mortality, improve household health by influencing nutritional and health care practices, and improve children's school performance. Several benefits of these behavioral changes also accrue to society, such as lower incidence of communicable diseases. Furthermore, education can increase social cohesion by teaching children to learn and work together with others from different social or ethnic groups early in life, contributing to nation-building and personal tolerance. Broad and equitable access to education is thus essential for sustained progress toward democracy, civic participation, and better governance.

Three caveats are clear, however. First, education development is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for development. Second, only investments in quality education—balanced among all parts of the system—make a difference. Third, the returns to these investments materialize only in an environment of good governance, political and macroeconomic stability, and broad and equitable access to social services.

**Stalled Progress in Education Development**

In 1960—about the time most African countries gained independence from colonial rule—the region lagged far behind the industrial world in nearly every standard indicator of education development. Efforts to redress this situation yielded dramatic results in the 1960s and 1970s. Since 1980 enrollments have declined. Access to education has risen slowly. The quality of facilities and teaching is poor in many areas. Repetition rates are high, completion rates low. While regional trends hide large national variations in education development, they are indicative of the challenges Africa faces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1 Gross Enrollment Ratios in Africa, 1960–97 (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary female as share of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary female as share of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary female as share of total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* All data include South Africa except 1960.

Access to primary schooling

Enrollments quintupled in the 1960s and 1970s—from 12 million to 62 million. Primary enrollments jumped from 11 million in 1960 to almost 53 million in 1980, while the primary gross enrollment ratio exceeded 79 percent in 1980 (table 1.1). Growth at the secondary and tertiary levels was even more dramatic, with secondary enrollments increasing by 15 times and tertiary enrollments by 20 times.

From 1980 to 1995 enrollments continued to increase in absolute terms, but much more slowly than during the initial post-independence period. The number of primary school students increased by 52 percent, to 76.5 million. The number of secondary school students doubled to 18.8 million. And the number of tertiary students more than tripled to 1.9 million.

At the primary level, however, enrollment growth did not keep up with population growth. The primary gross enrollment ratio fell from 80 percent in 1980 to 75 percent in 1990, largely a result of declining male participation rates. In the 1990s enrollments, especially for boys, began to recover, reaching 77 percent in 1997. At the secondary level the gross enrollment ratio in the 1990s was 26 percent for Africa, compared with 51 percent for all developing countries. The tertiary enrollment ratio in 1997 reached 3.9 percent for Africa, compared with 10 percent for all developing countries.

Female primary enrollments increased by 55 percent between 1980 and 1995 and almost kept up with population growth. At the secondary level female enrollments more than doubled, while at the tertiary level female enrollments increased more than fourfold. Despite these increases, gender inequalities persist at all levels. Female enrollments are only 80 percent of male enrollments at the primary and secondary levels and less than 55 percent at the tertiary level.

While gross enrollment rates have stagnated, intake and net enrollment rates showed considerable improvement in the 1990s (table 1.2). Net enrollment rates increased from 54 percent in 1990 to 60 percent in 1998, apparent intake rates from 70 percent to 81 percent, and net intake rates from 33 percent to 43 percent. The country coverage of these indicators, though incomplete, suggests that more school-age children are in school, the decline in boys’ participation has reversed, more children are enrolling in grade 1, and the proportion of underage and underaged children has dropped—

| Table 1.2 Primary School Net Enrollment and Intake Rates, 1990, 1995, and 1998 |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|----|
|                                  | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Net enrollment rate<sup>a</sup>  | 59.8 | 49.9  | 64.2 | 52.9  | 67.6 | 54.2  |
| Apparent intake rate<sup>b</sup> | 75.7 | 65.3  | 83.4 | 70.0  | 88.3 | 73.5  |
| Net intake rate<sup>c</sup>     | 34.7 | 31.9  | 41.4<sup>d</sup> | 40.6<sup>d</sup> | 44.5 | 41.6  |

a. Net enrollment is the proportion of school-age children—excluding underage or overage children—as a percentage of the school-age population.

b. Apparent, or gross, intake is the number of children entering grade 1, regardless of age, as a percentage of the population of official entry age.

c. Net intake is the number of school-age children entering school as a percentage of the official school-age population.

d. Because no data were available for 1995, these figures are for 1994.

Source: UNESCO 2000b.
possibly reflecting the decline in repetition rates reported by UNESCO (2000a). But many children enroll late (only two-thirds of the new entrants in 1998 were the official age for school enrollment), the gap in girls’ initial enrollment rate has increased, and more than 40 percent of school-age children are not in school.

Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Namibia, the Seychelles, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe sustained education progress despite concern about the quality of teaching and learning. Malawi, Mauritania, and Uganda implemented policies that resulted in a sudden increase in primary enrollments and now are struggling to deal with consequent quality challenges. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mozambique, and Senegal opted for a more gradual approach. Many others—Nigeria among them—are formulating comprehensive long-term strategies for education development, including universal primary education.

Despite the progress in some countries, access to primary education remains problematic in much of Africa. The economic problems of the 1980s caused a dramatic decline in primary participation rates that was redressed only partially in the 1990s (figure 1.1). Of the 44 countries with data for 1996, only 10 (Botswana, Cape Verde, Congo, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, and Zimbabwe) had a primary gross enrollment ratio of 100 percent. Six (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Somalia) had a primary gross enrollment ratio below 50 percent. And since 1985 the primary gross enrollment ratio has actually declined in 17 countries—Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, and Zambia. Together, the 17 are home to more than half of Africa’s school-age population (UNESCO 1998d).

**Figure 1.1 Primary Gross Enrollment Ratios Have Fallen in Many African Countries**

![Primary Gross Enrollment Ratios Have Fallen in Many African Countries](image)

The challenge is clear. In almost all countries, access has expanded far too slowly to achieve international education targets for gender equity and universal primary education. (The target dates of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee are 2005 for gender equity in primary and secondary enrollment and 2015 for universal primary education; OECD, DAC 1996.) About 12 percent of the world’s children ages 6–11 live in Africa, yet the region accounts for more than a third of children out of school. Unless current trends reverse, Africa will account for three-quarters of the world’s children out of school in 2015 (Oxfam 1999).

*Mastery of basic skills*

Learning conditions. Many African countries fail to provide an environment for effective learning. Children are taught in overcrowded classrooms by underqualified and unmotivated teachers who are often poorly and irregularly paid and receive little managerial support. Teacher absenteeism is widespread, disrupting learning and eroding public confidence in the value of education.

Learning is further constrained by limited learning materials (box 1.1). Materials that are available are often in languages that most students do not speak at home. A recent study (UNESCO 1998d) found that in 10 of 11 countries surveyed, more than a third of students had no chalkboards in their classrooms. In 8 of the 11 more than half the students in the highest grade had no math books. Most African children spend roughly half as much time in the classroom over the academic year as children in the industrial countries.

Poverty-related deprivation contributes to low education attainment in Africa. Poor children spend more time than other children contributing directly or indirectly to household income. As a result they are less likely to spend out-of-school hours on schoolwork, more likely to be absent from school during periods of peak labor demand, and more likely to be tired and ill-prepared for learning when they are in the classroom. More than 40 percent of children in Africa are stunted, while almost a third are underweight. Primary school-age children are especially susceptible to illnesses that affect poor people most, in particular gastrointestinal and respiratory problems.

### Box 1.1

**Textbook Availability in Africa**

Textbook availability is generally poor in most African countries. Some countries (Lesotho, for example) have had well-managed revolving textbook funds since the early 1980s and have managed to sustain high textbook provision. But these countries are exceptions. In Uganda field surveys in 1999 discovered that despite significant donor-supported textbook supplies, actual textbook:student ratios were as low as 1:30 in some cases, lower than the official estimate of 1:7. The main reason for the discrepancy appears to be a lower-than-expected book life caused by poor storage conditions and high losses and damages. Delays in book supplies and the rapid increase in primary enrollment have also contributed to the lack of adequate textbooks.

Textbooks are typically scarcer farther away from distribution centers: the difference in textbook availability between rural and urban areas is marked. Textbook availability also varies among grade levels and subjects. At the secondary level more books are available for core subjects, such as language and math, than for science and humanities. Although official curricula usually specify between 8 and 10 subjects, donors tend to supply books only for core subjects.
Malnourished and sick children are less likely than healthy children to learn in school and are more likely to be absent from lessons (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991). And if private costs for education are substantial, parents in poor households are more likely to withdraw their children from school early in the school cycle (UNICEF 1999). All these effects are exacerbated by the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, which affects the attendance of teachers and students and strains household resources.

Monitoring and assessment. Unsurprisingly, students who complete primary school often have an unacceptably low level of learning. The few regular assessments of learning achievement in Africa are not encouraging. In 1990–91 Botswana, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe participated in a 31-country survey of grade 9 reading skills (Elley 1992). Students in these three countries registered the lowest scores, performing considerably worse than students in the other four non-African developing countries participating in the survey, (the Philippines, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela).

More recently, the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality assessed the reading skills of grade 6 students in Mauritius, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zanzibar, Tanzania. The mean for reading achievement—that is, the average percentage of correct answers—ranged from 38 percent to 58 percent (figure 1.2). In Senegal only 25 percent of students recently tested on proficiency in material from the official curriculum achieved mastery level—defined as a score of 75 percent correct or higher—in science and French (INEADE 1997).

Retention. The poor learning environment in many African schools often results in high repetition rates and low completion rates (UNESCO 1998a). A few African countries have low repetition rates. Some of these, for example, Zambia, have adopted a policy of automatic promotion. In others, such as Mauritius, effective instruction results in less than 10 percent of students repeating each year. But in 15 countries more than 20 percent of students are repeaters—in Côte d’Ivoire more than half of all primary students are repeat-

---

**Figure 1.2  Results of Reading Achievement Tests in Selected Countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Expository</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Total Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zanzibar, Tanzania</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ing a grade at any time. Repetition is an inefficient use of scarce resources. In 11 of 33 countries with data, the input-output ratio (the number of student-years spent by a cohort entering primary school divided by the theoretical number of student-years graduates need take to complete primary education without repeating or dropping out) is more than 1.5. The closer the value to 1, the ideal, the more efficient the system. These countries spend 50 percent or more than would be necessary in an ideal system.

Repetition is also a major factor in students’ dropping out of school, since learning rarely improves after students repeat grades. In Africa only Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Zimbabwe have primary completion rates of more than 90 percent. In 14 of 32 countries for which data are available, more than a third of school entrants fail to reach the final grade (UNESCO 1998a). In the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Madagascar, and Mozambique fewer than half the children who enroll in primary school complete five years. Many of the students drop out early in the primary cycle, before they acquire even rudimentary literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in Chad, Ethiopia, and Madagascar more than a third of the children who enter school never complete grade 2.

Beyond Primary Education

Few countries provide adequate opportunities for education and training needed by 12–17-year-olds (figure 1.3). While some youths in this age cohort have never attended school and others have dropped out, in many countries an increasing proportion have completed primary education and are looking for opportunities to either continue formal schooling or acquire skills that will equip them to enter the world of work. This is the age when people acquire habits of lifelong learning and develop skills and interests. The education and skills of this age group will be crucial in shaping national development well into the 21st century.

Education and training for youths is not only an economic imperative. In many countries young peo-

---

**Figure 1.3** Estimated Enrollment Ratios of 12–17-Year-Olds by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Asia/Oceania</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Asia</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: UNESCO 1995.*
ple's dissatisfaction and disillusionment with their prospects for education and work threaten social cohesion and stability. Reaching this age group through formal and nonformal education is also vital to the success of targeted interventions in such areas as HIV/AIDS and reproductive health education and programs to raise awareness of civic rights and responsibilities. Yet only one-fourth of youths in this age group have access to secondary education, and only 6 percent are reached by vocational and nonformal education programs. Moreover, the quality of publicly funded skills development programs is usually poor. These programs depend heavily on external financing and carry high costs per student (Middleton, Van Adams, and Ziderman 1993). Such programs often are also poorly attuned to labor market demand and fail to lead to income-earning opportunities. Skills training programs typically are geared to formal sector employment at a time when the formal sector in most African countries absorbs only a small minority of labor market recruits (Mingat and Suchet forthcoming).

Access to new communication, information, and computer technology is limited in secondary and public training institutions in Africa. The lack of instructional equipment and materials further inhibits learning. Parallel to public training institutions, almost all African countries have a large private training sector that trains people for employment in the formal and informal sectors through on-the-job and school-based training. While many of these private training approaches have been successful, many others are of poor quality. Only a few give students the skills they need to work in the emerging information and communications economy.

Higher Education

In many African countries universities are the only national institutions with the skills, equipment, and mandate to generate new knowledge through research and to adapt global knowledge to solve local problems. Yet African universities are relatively new and weak institutions. Early curriculum links to religious studies and civil service needs have often promoted the humanities and social sciences at the expense of the natural sciences, applied technology, business-related skills, and research capabilities (World Bank 1998a).

Many countries have found it difficult to move away from the colonial model in which the state was the only legitimate provider of higher education for a small privileged elite. The effectiveness of university education has been further hampered by poor national economic performance, inappropriate governing structures, weak national policies, weak managerial capacity, political interference in universities, and campus instability (ADEA 1999b). Meanwhile, often limited regional cooperation among institutions further restricts teaching and research capacity. Nevertheless, enrollment growth in higher education has been unprecedented. In 1960 Africa (excluding South Africa) had six universities with fewer than 30,000 students. In 1995 the region supported nearly 120 universities enrolling almost 2 million.

Dwindling resources during this period of growing enrollments (ADEA 1999a) has had a sharply negative impact on the quality of education in African universities. Expenditure per student—measured in units of GNP per capita—declined in 10 of 15 countries for which data are available. In countries such as Mauritania and Zambia expenditure per student fell by more than 50 percent. Yet on average African higher education remains expensive by international standards. In 1992 public education spending per pupil as a percentage of per capita GNP was 15.1 percent at the pre-primary and primary levels, 53.7 percent at the secondary level, and 507 percent at the university level. This disparity makes the strategic management of higher education resources a central concern of any education development policy. Some universities have begun to develop alternative methods of service delivery through distance edu-
cation programs for rural and sparsely populated areas, disadvantaged students, and students who work full time. A number of universities are beginning to use Internet-based technologies. These options offer an alternative to the traditional higher-education model of full-time pre-employment training on residential campuses, but in most cases the potential of the new technologies is underused.

**Efficiency**

The efficiency of education expenditures varies considerably, as do the reasons for differences within and between francophone and anglophone countries. In some countries, especially in the Sahel, high teacher salaries make it difficult to mobilize the resources to reach universal primary education in the foreseeable future. In other countries teacher salaries are so low that teachers are forced to take additional jobs.

Teacher deployment policies can also lead to inefficient and inequitable distribution of resources. Often teachers are not deployed according to number of students, years of experience, or salary. The teacher:student ratio in Niger, for example, varies widely from school to school (figure 1.4). For example, in primary schools of 200 students, the teacher:student ratio ranges from 1:100 to 1:20. The situation is similar at the secondary level. These discrepancies can jeopardize the effective operation of the entire education system and almost invariably result in low student learning and participation rates. Detailed country-specific analysis is needed for an appropriate policy response.

A recent study (Lewin and Caillods 1999) argues that developing countries with low secondary enrollments, including most African countries, cannot finance substantially higher participation rates from domestic public resources with current cost structures. At a given income level the cost per student of secondary schooling varies considerably between countries and within countries. In fact, secondary schooling is most expensive relative to GNP per capita in countries with the lowest enrollment rates. In Africa secondary schools use resources such as teachers and buildings much less efficiently than primary schools. One reason may be that in the poorest countries, secondary schools are still organized along traditional lines to educate a small elite.

Limited public resources and competing public spending priorities have prevented many governments from addressing the challenges of education development. Since the mid-1980s the share of education spending in the GDP has increased in 14 of the 26 African countries for which data are available, remained the same in 1, and decreased in 11. Perhaps more significant, this share is still less than 3 percent in 8 countries (UNESCO 1998c). At a given level of education spending as a share of GDP, participation and attainment levels in Africa compare unfavorably with those in other low-income countries (table 1.3). Inefficient and inequitable use of scarce resources in a context of high population growth and demand for general public financing of education by politically powerful pressure groups adds to the fiscal challenge. Thus countries must set priorities for public spending, achieve efficiency gains where possible, and identify opportunities for mobilizing additional public and private resources.

**Private Education**

The private sector is an increasingly important provider of education in Africa. Private providers range from community-run schools relying on in-kind contributions to for-profit schools run for the wealthy. Today most registered private schools in Africa are nonprofit community and religious
schools (IIEP 1999). The private sector plays a small role at the primary level, but its share in meeting secondary, vocational, and tertiary education needs has increased significantly in recent years. In Côte d'Ivoire 36 percent of general secondary students and 65 percent of technical students are enrolled in private schools (Vawda, Yaoub, and Patrinos 1999). In Zambia almost 90 percent of students taking technical and vocational examinations were trained outside public institutions. Private education can reduce the financial burden on governments, give parents more choice and control, and improve accountability.

Some countries are also increasing the role of private providers in delivering support services such as textbook publishing, classroom construction, and university catering. Countries will need detailed analyses of these programs, organizational arrangements, and cost structures as they consider affordable policies for expanding access to secondary education, vocational training, technical education, and higher education.
Table 1.3 Comparative Indicators of Education Spending Efficiency, 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Education Spending/GDP (percent)</th>
<th>Primary Education Spending/GDP (percent)</th>
<th>Gross Enrollment Ratio (percent)</th>
<th>Years of Schooling per 1 Percent of GDP</th>
<th>Primary Teacher Salary/GDP per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other French-speaking</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.58</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Saharan African countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>English-speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Saharan African countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-African countries (GNP &lt;$2000 per capita)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.47</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limited Education Attainment

The economic shocks Africa experienced in the 1980s and early 1990s are still felt in education systems. Following earlier progress, education development stagnated and in several cases declined. Many countries still cannot provide their populations with equitable opportunities for good education. As a result many people still have little or no education, skilled workers are lacking, and the region is increasingly isolated from global knowledge networks.

The average African adult has fewer than three years of education (figure 1.5). One in three males and one in two females is illiterate. In several countries the average six-year-old can expect to receive fewer than three years of formal education. Average education attainment in Burkina Faso is estimated at three years for males and two years for females; in Mozambique it is estimated at four years for males and three years for females (UNESCO 1998c). In almost all countries the situation is worse for girls. Average male and female literacy rates in Africa differ by almost 10 percentage points, while average primary gross enrollment ratios differ by 14 percentage points (UNESCO 1998c). Only five African countries (Botswana, Cape Verde, Kenya, Lesotho, and Namibia) have female primary gross enrollment ratios equal to or above those for males.

As disturbing as the low levels of literacy and education attainment is the marked decline in the capacity of many African countries to generate knowledge as a resource for tertiary level instruction and for research and technology development. A 1992 study (UNESCO 1999a) estimated that Africa has only 20,000 scientists and engineers, or 0.36 percent of the world’s total. In Nigeria, with 20 percent of Africa’s population, only 15 scientists and engineers per million people engage in research and develop-
ment, compared with 149 in India, 350 in China, and 3,700 in the United States (UNESCO 1998c).

A continuing brain drain exacerbates these problems. Reasons vary from country to country but usually relate to a lack of employment opportunities in the modern sector, limited research budgets in universities, and the lack of freedom of speech and the fear of political repression in countries with authoritarian regimes. Available figures suggest that about 30,000 Africans holding Ph.D. degrees live outside the continent, and 130,000 Africans study in higher learning institutions outside Africa. Many of those who find employment abroad never return.

Limited Impact of External Aid

Africa has consistently received more external aid than other regions. Between 1996 and 1997 over a third of total official development assistance flows went to Sub-Saharan Africa despite the fact that the region accounts for only 12 percent of the total developing country population. Africa also is more aid dependent than other regions. In 1997 official development assistance represented 6.7 percent of Africa’s GNP, compared with an average of less than 1 percent for all developing countries (UNDP 1999). Worldwide, about 10 percent of aid supports education and about 1.5 percent supports basic education. Since 1992, however, aid flows have declined, and since 1994 aid to Africa has dropped by $3.7 billion (Oxfam 1999). The effect of this reduction in aid on education access and quality is not clear.

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All was an important impetus for a review of education development strategies and assistance priorities. World Bank lending for basic education, having increased in the late 1980s, jumped considerably after the conference. Until 1990 bilateral support for basic education was limited. After the conference aid agencies began to reorder their priorities and formulate policies for increased assistance to basic education. The result was substantial bilateral support for basic education development, especially in Africa. In 1996, 42 percent of the $668 million Africa received in aid to education went to basic education (figure 1.6), an important increase from the late 1980s. Yet
Official development assistance represents only 3–4 percent of total expenditure on education in Africa. This average hides large variations: some countries receive virtually no foreign aid, while others receive aid from several donors and can fund much of their public expenditure on education from external sources. In some post-conflict countries, such as Mozambique, aid to education has roughly equaled spending from domestically generated revenue in recent years.

Externally assisted education development programs have a mixed record. Many programs—including those supported by the Bank—have failed to achieve the expected results, especially in strengthening national policies and institutions. Sustaining initial positive results has even been more difficult. In only a few cases has external assistance brought about systemic reform. The reasons for this mixed record are varied and complex. In many countries political upheaval and violent conflict have disrupted reforms. In other countries governments have faced formidable political opposition to sector reform, particularly reform that challenges traditional modes of financing and delivery that benefit privileged minorities.

Shortcomings in donor approaches have contributed to the mixed record of aid for education. Often donors have paid insufficient attention to countries’ capacity to manage development programs, so that aid has not been used as efficiently as it could have been. Donors have rarely coordinated their education aid programs, and many projects remain enclave operations with limited national ownership. Where national ownership is lacking, donors and governments often have different objectives. In this situation fungibility can become a problem, and aid is more likely to substitute for, rather than complement, government efforts (Feyzioglu, Swaroop, and Zhu 1998; World Bank 1998a). Programs have often failed to take into account national macroeconomic and institutional environments, focusing instead on specific investments reflecting external agencies’ agendas rather than national priorities and often supporting the creation of unsustainable parallel systems. Weak coordination of external aid programs has multiplied the demands on domestic institutions, led to fragmented and duplicated efforts, distorted spending priorities, and produced gaps in coverage and funding.

These problems are widely recognized by donors and governments. In response, several
countries, including Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Zambia, have designed sectorwide approaches. But experience with these approaches is limited, and not all agencies have sufficient staff with the analytical, policy, and operational skills required to contribute effectively to the design of these programs. Similarly, many countries do not have the national capacity to manage the design and implementation of these programs or coordinate the assistance of several donors—especially when donor policies and procedures differ.

The case for increasing aid flows to education, particularly basic education, is strong. But perhaps the most urgent challenge is ensuring that aid programs produce visible and sustainable results on the ground. A recent review of aid effectiveness argues that aid should find the right combination of finance and ideas to address different situations and problems (World Bank 1998a). This report finds that:

- Financial aid works in a strong policy environment. In weak policy environments, money has less impact.
- Policy-based aid should be provided to nurture better policies in countries with credible reformers and strong domestic leaders.
- Development projects should strengthen institutions and policies by increasing the efficacy of public spending and by promoting partnerships with civil society to replace top-down approaches to project design and implementation.
- Projects should create and transmit knowledge and capacity and include evaluation as part of the process.
- In distorted policy environments, ideas are more useful than large-scale finance.
- Ideas will have the greatest impact where partnerships between government and donors are genuine and grounded in dialogue.

The World Bank study of aid effectiveness recommends that aid agencies become more selective, more knowledge based, better coordinated, and more self-critical. While they do not focus specifically on education, the findings are a useful framework for rethinking approaches to aid for education (see chapter 4).
2. The Challenges of the African Development Context

Economic growth was slow in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s. Rising oil prices and weakening export markets in industrial countries, along with drought and civil strife in many African countries, resulted in balance of payments deficits and declining and often negative economic growth rates. These problems reflected years of poor economic management and exposed unsustainable structural weaknesses in the economies. Average real GDP growth in the region dropped from about 5 percent in the 1960s to less than 2 percent in the 1980s and 0.1 percent during 1990–93. Because of rapid population growth, this drop represented an annual average decline of 1 percent in per capita GDP between 1980 and 1995. As a result, by the mid-1990s only 12 countries in the region had a higher per capita GDP than they had in 1975.

Many African countries had to adjust their economies to the changing economic environment. But during 1994–97 growth rates gradually recovered, and real GDP growth per capita averaged 2.9 percent. In 1997 per capita growth averaged 3.1 percent and was positive for 35 of the 47 Sub-Saharan countries for which data are available. Notwithstanding the worldwide financial crisis, half the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa showed a positive growth in 1998.

The economic crisis of the 1980s had a severe impact on the education sector (chapter 1), adversely affecting household demand for and public supply of education. Without accelerated improvements in the sector, the region’s long-term development prospects will remain dim. Yet the context for education development in the region is daunting:

- Poverty is pervasive.
- Economies function at the periphery of the global economy.
- Development finance is difficult to mobilize.
- New scientific knowledge is slow to penetrate the continent.
- Armed conflicts disrupt civil society.
- HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly, and disease exacts a heavy toll.
- Fertility rates remain high.

Pervasive Poverty

Economic stagnation in the 1980s and early 1990s had a devastating impact on the progress of human development in Africa. Most basic social indicators still lag behind those of other regions (table 2.1). Of the 35 countries the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) classifies as having low human development, 28 are in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP 1999). More than 40 percent of Africans live below the $1 a day poverty line, and the incidence of poverty as well as the absolute numbers of people living in poverty have increased since the late 1980s. Extreme poverty and deprivation both impede investments in education by governments and households and are a result of low educational attainment.

Development strategies designed to reduce poverty must thus be grounded in sound economic policy and centered on human capital development programs. With its rapidly growing population, the region needs an annual growth per capita of 5 percent to keep the number of poor from rising and it must do so in such a way that increased production expands employment opportunities and improves access to social services for the poor. To halve the incidence of poverty African countries will have to sustain annual per capita growth rates of at least 7 percent until 2015 (World Bank 2000b). Human development programs must be based on clear analysis of who the poor are and what mechanisms exclude them from social services, including education.
Table 2.1 Basic Social Indicators by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 Live Births)</th>
<th>Primary Gross Enrollment Rate (percentage)</th>
<th>Life Expectancy (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Economies at the Periphery of the Global Economy

With 18 percent of the world’s land and 11 percent of its people, Africa produces just 1 percent of global GDP. The international economy has expanded and changed dramatically in the past 20 years, with shifting patterns of trade and competition and continuous technological innovation. Together these changes are creating a high-speed, knowledge-driven, and competitive global economy. Africa has not been able to maintain its share in this new global economy.

During 1980–96 as world GDP grew 3.3 percent a year, GDP growth in Africa averaged only 1.7 percent a year. Worldwide exports of goods and services (in current dollars) almost tripled during this period, but Africa’s exports stagnated, causing its share of the total to plummet from about 4.0 percent to 1.3 percent (World Bank 1999c). The rapid increase in foreign direct investment since 1990 has largely bypassed the region, reflecting in part the overhang effect of unsustainable external debts. Between 1990 and 1996 less than 3 percent of foreign direct investment flows to developing countries went to Africa (World Bank 1997). Many African economies have a small modern productive sector, typically absorbing no more than 30 percent of the economically active labor force (ILO 1998). Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of the informal and modern sectors is a challenge that few African countries can afford to ignore.

As noted, however, most African economies have experienced faster growth since 1994. More flexible and competitive exchange rates, healthier fiscal balances, and an improving export market indicate that the recent trend can be sustained over the next few years. Furthermore, the continent can make huge gains if it can take advantage of its catch-up potential in the returns on new investment (Killick 1998).

Longer-term economic performance will depend on improvements in human capital and the associated ability to use modern technology, as well as on improvements in public institutions and infrastructure at national and regional levels. The most important determinant of the pace of Africa’s development may be its ability to create, acquire,
absorb, and communicate knowledge (World Bank 1999c). This process can accelerate if the region can leapfrog to new technologies, skipping intermediate stages. But without concerted effort, countries will be unable to adapt to the demands of a globalized economy and will risk further marginalization. Africa needs to improve its macroeconomic policies, governance, and export performance and to invest more in human capital. And in several countries development policy needs to recognize that people are the most important—sometimes virtually the only—resource they have. Thus the development of education—at all levels, from basic to tertiary—is the central development imperative.

**Inadequate Financing for Development**

Sustained economic growth and poverty elimination depend on strong and effective government. Unless governments can mobilize finance from stable sources, they will be unable to meet their core responsibilities in the social sectors and in infrastructure or to provide the institutional framework needed for development. Education financing is typically one of the largest items of government expenditure, often claiming as much as one-fifth or more of the total budget. Spending on education increases in line with population and income growth and is a long-term investment that requires a predictable income source.

In recent years many African countries have improved markedly the efficiency, equity, and transparency of their tax regimes. Yet the countries still face enormous challenges to resource mobilization, and Africa’s unmet needs are greater than those of any other region. Tax revenue is low even by developing country standards, typically about 10 percent of GNP. Domestic capacity to raise revenue is often limited, and the tax base is small in the region’s predominantly rural and nonwage economies. This small tax base traditionally has led to favoring other tax instruments, in particular trade-based taxes, but trade liberalization is eroding these instruments. The contraction of the formal economy and the concomitant growth of the informal sector in many countries pose further challenges to resource mobilization, given the difficulty of taxing small-scale enterprises in the urban gray and black economy (Grunberg 1998).

The resource envelope available to governments often has been further constricted by weak economic performance and the volatility and decline of export receipts for primary commodities exports, on which most countries in the region depend heavily. The combined effect of these constraints has been falling per capita expenditures on priority social services, including education. Between 1985 and 1995 regional spending per student on primary education fell by 6 percent. In stark contrast to this decrease, primary education spending increased approximately threefold in every other developing region over the same period. Per student spending fell similarly at the secondary and tertiary levels (UNESCO 1998d).

Unsustainable public debt has further constrained the mobilization of development finance across much of the region. Debt overhang has created uncertainty for domestic and foreign investors and restricted growth. Unsustainable debt has also imposed a direct fiscal burden in many heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs) by diverting limited public revenue to debt repayments. Debt has acted as a further brake on growth by undermining public investment in social and economic infrastructure. Many African HIPCs have spent three to four times as much on debt servicing as on basic social services in recent years. Resolution of the debt impasse is now in sight. The current HIPC debt relief initiative, which provides comprehensive debt stock reduction, is expected to relieve almost 20 African countries of unsustainable debt burdens and significantly increase their national education budgets within the next five years.

Falling aid flows to Africa have mirrored challenges to mobilizing domestic revenue. Between
1990 and 1998 per capita net aid flows to Africa fell from $32 to $19, reflecting the global decline in aid flows since 1991 (World Bank 2000b). Falling aid flows have reduced the proportionate contribution of aid to developing country financing needs, but the decline has been accompanied by a surge in private capital flows to developing countries. Yet Africa has been largely bypassed by these private flows and still depends heavily on official development assistance. In 1996 net aid flows to the region—excluding South Africa—equaled 8.6 percent of regional GNP, compared with less than 1 percent in other developing regions.

Whether the HIPC initiative provides real additional finance for African countries or simply recycles existing aid budgets will determine whether downward aid trends can be reversed. In the longer term, the extent to which debt relief boosts investor confidence in Africa and the ability of African governments and creditors to avoid future debt crises will be crucial in shaping prospects for economic growth, poverty alleviation, and reduced aid dependency.

### Insufficient Scientific Knowledge

The global explosion of knowledge gives African countries an opportunity to narrow information and knowledge gaps, thereby raising incomes and living standards much faster than previously imagined. But to take advantage of the global stock of knowledge, countries need to develop the technological competence—typically in universities and other public and private research institutions—to select, absorb, and adapt imported technology and pursue a research agenda focused on local problems. Creating, absorbing, and communicating new knowledge requires basic education (pre-primary, primary, and adult) for all and opportunities to continue learning and to acquire advanced technical and scientific skills (World Bank 1999b). Africa lags behind on both counts. More than 40 million of its children are out of school. Secondary enrollments are low, especially in science and math classes. And the science and technology base of most African countries is inadequate.

Public investments in scientific research and development are estimated at 0.2 percent of regional GNP, one of the lowest levels in the world. The region is responsible for only 0.8 percent of the world’s scientific publications (UNESCO 1999a). Most African universities lack sufficient resources to carry out effective teaching and research.

To take advantage of the new knowledge economy, Africa needs well-trained scientific, technological, and processing personnel—including some with sophisticated research skills—who can participate in advances in key fields (physics, materials science, computer science, technology, engineering) and who can assess and develop local applications of new technology. World class centers for scientific education and research, able to supply and retain these personnel, will be needed at regional and subregional levels.

Weak communication networks and information flows further constrain Africa’s use of new knowledge. These shortcomings limit information on the quality of products and services, inhibit monitoring, and impede exchanging information with beneficiaries (box 2.1). Addressing these information gaps will be an essential element of every national knowledge management strategy.

### Extensive Armed Conflicts

In 1996 alone a third of African countries experienced armed conflicts. One African in five lives in a country severely disrupted by war. These conflicts cause enormous human suffering, material devastation, human capital depletion, and damage to the social and cultural fabric that holds nations together. Conflicts have also destabilized the region as a whole, eroding investor confidence, disrupting trade routes, accelerating the spread of HIV/AIDS,
Box 2.1

Africa’s Information Infrastructure

- Daily newspaper circulation per 1,000 people in Africa ranges from 1 in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania to 28 in Gabon and 31 in Botswana (compared with 135 in Argentina, 246 in Latvia, and 800 in Hong Kong).
- The number of radios per 1,000 people averages 198, ranging from 34 in Angola to 231 in Ghana and 316 in South Africa (compared with 163 in China, 404 in Lithuania, and 469 in Malaysia). Three of five Africans live within reach of a radio transmitter.
- The number of television sets per 1,000 people averages 36, ranging from less than 1 in Eritrea to 96 in Swaziland and 123 in South Africa (compared with 322 in Trinidad and Tobago, 469 in the Czech Republic, and 805 in the United States). Television is limited mainly to major towns.
- The number of personal computers per 1,000 people averages 3, ranging from less than 1 in Africa.


and sending refugee populations into neighboring countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated the number of refugees, returnees, and persons displaced within their own countries at 22.3 million in Africa in 1998. Between 1990 and 1994, more than 1 million people died as a result of conflict. By conservative estimate, 200,000 Africans died because of war in 1998. Most of those who died were civilians, and a growing number of the perpetrators of violence are children. The rising numbers of child combatants in Africa pose enormous challenges for post-conflict social rehabilitation and economic development.

Before countries affected by conflict can move forward economically and politically, they must end civil strife, not only stopping hostilities but also addressing the causes of conflicts. Countries will then have to rebuild and expand the infrastructure needed to increase economic productivity; improve human welfare, mobility, and communication; and reintegrate different population groups into a dynamic and vibrant society. At the same time, democracy has to take root in civil society, and governments must continue to develop and adhere to systems of good governance, accountability, and responsibility.

The challenge for education efforts in countries emerging from conflicts or civil repression is to support conflict resolution and instill civic values and principles of democracy, tolerance, and cooperation. Restoring and improving basic social services, especially education, is crucial to the post
conflict transition. Education helps normalize an often chaotic environment and is a powerful symbol of confidence in the future. Education also helps restore the stock of human and social capital that is depleted during conflicts. To become productive members of society, former combatants must have viable opportunities to secure a livelihood without taking what they want or need by force. To avoid becoming a lost generation, children whose education has been disrupted need opportunities to catch up, often requiring nontraditional approaches to learning. In many countries NGOs play a key role in delivering nonformal education to such children, both in post-conflict and conflict situations.

The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The burden of disease is dramatically higher in Africa than elsewhere in the world and an obstacle to regional economic and human development. Malaria, onchocerciasis (river blindness), and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), though they occur elsewhere in the world, are essentially African diseases. Malaria, which accounts for about 11 percent of the burden of disease in the region, exacts both a human and economic toll, costing many African countries over 1 percent of their GDP (Leighton and Foster 1993; Gallup and Sachs 1998; Shepard and others 1991).

But HIV/AIDS is the condition that most profoundly threatens African development, having hit Africa harder than any other region. In 1998 the region accounted for 70 percent of all new HIV infections and 80 percent of all AIDS-related deaths. Two-thirds of the world’s 33.4 million people living with HIV and 9 of 10 children carrying the virus are African (UNAIDS 1999).

The 21 countries with the highest prevalence rates are found in Africa. In Botswana and Zimbabwe one in four adults is infected. In at least 10 other African countries prevalence rates exceed 10 percent. The data are perhaps most alarming at the individual level. A child born today in Zambia or Zimbabwe is more likely than not to die of AIDS, while in several other African countries the lifetime risk of dying as a result of AIDS is greater than one in three. Declining life expectancy across much of central and southern Africa reflects the spread of the virus. In nine African countries with adult prevalence of 10 percent or more, life expectancy is projected to regress to an average of just 47 years by 2015 (World Bank 1999b).

An especially devastating aspect of the pandemic is that it usually affects people in their most productive years. A mortality rate of 3 percent in the 20–30 age group—in which infection rates are highest—translates into half of the age cohort dying within 14 years. In the most severely affected countries, spreading from eastern through central and southern Africa, HIV/AIDS is reversing years of investment in education and training, creating shortages of skilled labor in the modern sector, and burdening already overextended health budgets. In Botswana, with a prevalence rate among adults of close to 25 percent, the epidemic could reverse years of buoyant economic growth by creating severe labor shortages, reducing government revenue by 7 percent and increasing expenditures by 15–20 percent, and reducing the GDP growth rate by 1.5 percentage points. Within 25 years the economy would be 31 percent smaller than it would have been without the epidemic. In Tanzania, with a prevalence rate of almost 20 percent, GDP will decline between 15 and 25 percent by 2015 if the epidemic continues to spread at its present rate.

The demographic impact of HIV/AIDS on the region is less clear. However, most experts believe that the pandemic may not significantly affect the dependency ratio (Stover 1999). HIV/AIDS has increased the adult mortality rate, but this increase will be largely offset by fewer births and an increase in child mortality resulting from perinatal infection. While HIV/AIDS has led to significant downward revisions of growth projections in the
most severely affected countries, fertility will not drop rapidly enough in any country to cause negative growth (Decosas and Adrien 1999).

The impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa has important implications for planning and providing education (box 2.2). First, HIV/AIDS forces millions of children out of school and into work. As adults become sick and die, households face a double squeeze—they have more needs but less ability to meet them. Households have been forced into increasingly desperate coping strategies as a result. Traditional family structures are frayed and in the worst cases disappear. Twelve million children in Africa have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS, many of them cared for by elderly relatives ill-equipped to provide for the children’s development. Most of these orphans will suffer permanently as a result of leaving school, entering the world of work early, and eating less. In the worst-affected countries, including Botswana, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, about 30–35 percent of children have lost one or both parents to the disease. Providing these children with genuinely accessible forms of education that are flexible and sensitive to their special needs and the trauma many of them have experienced is an urgent and ongoing challenge for every African society.

Second, AIDS threatens to reinforce gender disparities in education in Africa. Girls in AIDS-affected households are more likely than boys to remain at home to nurse sick relatives and perform tasks that were previously the responsibility of other family members. Given the importance of girls’ education for gains in nutrition, fertility, and health, this trend seriously threatens wider development prospects in the region.

Third, AIDS is devastating the teaching profession. More than 30 percent of teachers in Malawi and Zambia are infected. In 1996 Zambia reported more than 600 teacher deaths; by 1999 this number had more than doubled. Teacher deaths from AIDS-related illnesses now outstrip the number of teachers trained in the country’s training colleges. Similarly, academic staff at universities are dying at an alarming rate. This depletion of scarce human capital is both a human tragedy and an economic disaster. AIDS also affects the quality of teaching. The disease results in listlessness and prolonged absenteeism among sick staff and a widespread sense of helplessness. Learning outcomes are further affected by low attendance rates among children and the diversion of resources to health expenditures and away from vital education investments (such as learning materials) at household and national levels.

Education plans urgently need to factor in explicitly, at every level, the likely personnel and financial costs of the pandemic and the changing nature of education demand. Growth projections of Zambia’s primary school age population illustrate this urgency. In 1998 Zambia had about 1.9 million school children. With HIV/AIDS, the country is expected to have over 2.2 million in 2015. Without HIV/AIDS, the projection would have reached far more than 2.9 million. Increasingly, schools will need special arrangements to help ensure continued effective instruction, and universities must plan to replace many faculty members.

At the same time, education systems have a vital role in reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by addressing some of the key underlying causes: poverty, lack of knowledge, and gender inequalities. Until the world has a vaccine or therapies that developing countries can afford, AIDS prevention strategies will depend largely on education campaigns to persuade people to change their behavior. Providing information on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive health issues in formal and nonformal programs for youth and adults can combat the spread of the virus. Schools can provide many of these services. Children are a window of hope in efforts to combat the disease: most can be easily reached through the education system, and because 90 percent of HIV infection is sexually transmitted, infection rates are low among 5–14-year-olds. Experience shows that if HIV/AIDS prevention is to succeed, educators must seek every opportunity to include the topic in
Box 2.2

Education and AIDS: Experience in Zambia and Uganda

In the African countries most severely affected by AIDS, the social and economic changes brought about by the pandemic are so vast that education systems face collapse unless they place AIDS at the center of their national education agendas. A human development emergency on this scale requires emergency responses. Education systems face a double challenge: they need to plan to cope with the effects of AIDS on the functioning of the system (Zambia) and at the same time mobilize it to contribute to the fight against the spread of AIDS (Uganda).

The implications of AIDS for education planning—Zambia

Countries such as Zambia, where one-third of all children have lost a parent to AIDS and children now head 7 percent of all households, need first to factor the impact of AIDS into planning at every level of the education system and in each subsector:

- As a result of AIDS there are fewer children to educate, fewer children can afford education, and fewer children can complete education. By 2010 Zambia will have about 25 percent fewer children to educate than it would have had without AIDS. The country will need to deploy resources to reflect shifting patterns of demand for education—across subsectors, regions, and communities.

- Output from teacher training colleges in Zambia cannot even replace teachers who are lost to AIDS. Many of the most experienced professionals, including head teachers, managers, planners, and inspectors, are dying. The profile of staff is changing. Sector staff are on average younger and less experienced than before, and productivity is lower because of the large numbers of sick and absent staff. To address this situation, Zambia will have to revise planning of staff needs, build capacity for monitoring and coping with the impact of AIDS, and develop intrasectoral information systems as well as sensitive policies for dealing with the needs and human rights of AIDS-affected personnel.

- The country will need more accountable and cost-effective financial management at all levels to respond to reduced national, community, and household resources for education. Households have lost income and diverted resources to health expenditures. National-level funds are tied down by sick and inactive sector staff who remain on the payroll, and are again diverted to health care. At the same time, communities most affected by AIDS can contribute less labor to school development.

AIDS-affected countries will also need to rethink the traditional school model and apply more flexible and sensitive models that meet the needs of children—especially orphans—who have been traumatized, impoverished, stunted, and alienated by the sickness and loss of family members. Assumptions about the enrollment age, curriculum content, and advisability of bringing together large numbers of young people in often high-risk situations will have to be challenged.

The role of education in combating AIDS—Uganda

Education can play a vital role in reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by reaching children with health education messages before they become sexually active. Uganda has experienced one of the most severe AIDS epidemics in Sub-Saharan Africa, but since the early 1990s the rate of new infection in that country has been falling. HIV seroprevalence among pregnant women in Kampala almost halved between 1989 and 1993, and reported behavior of young people has shifted markedly. Between 1989 and 1995 the per-
Box 2.2 (continued)

Percentage of 15-19-year-olds who had had sexual intercourse fell from 69 to 44 percent among men and from 74 to 54 percent among women. Condom use has risen significantly in the same age group, and the percentage of people with casual sexual partners has fallen.

These trends evolved in the context of a national AIDS strategy that had full political backing at the highest level. In the education sector teaching about sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, was introduced into the primary curriculum. Messages emphasized not only the facts of transmission but also sexual behavior and gender relations. District health educators worked closely with teachers, supervising the content of classes and supporting school health through visits. Meanwhile, educators tried to move away from the didactic teaching style common to most schools in Uganda by using theatre, group discussions, and mass media to engage students.

Uganda's experience shows that community support is vital to the success of HIV/AIDS education. Programs that aggressively challenge community values and attitudes toward sufferers can be counterproductive and generate long-term resentment against public sector interventions. The participatory approaches used in Uganda—listening to and answering people's misapprehensions and working with children and parents to design materials about HIV/AIDS—have overcome suspicion and helped change behavior.


school and training curricula at all levels. Such efforts are unlikely without clear and open political commitment and adequate resources. Where these have been forthcoming, as in Senegal and Uganda, the spread of the virus has been checked.

High Fertility

Africa has 11 percent of the world's people but 19 percent of its births. Total fertility rates in Africa are the highest in the world—at 5.5 in 1997 compared with 1.8 in East Asia and the Pacific, 2.7 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 3.3 in South Asia. Africa is the only region whose school-age population is projected to increase rapidly over the next 20 years (figure 2.1), although the rate of increase will be affected by the extent to which the spread of AIDS can be stemmed. By 2015 Africa will probably have 45 percent more children than it did in 1996.

Such rapid population growth translates into an especially high dependency ratio. The school-age dependency ratio (the number of children ages 6-14 as a share of adults ages 15-64) is 47 percent in Africa compared with 41 percent in the Middle East and North Africa, 37 percent in South Asia, and 33 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. Africa's larger school-age population relative to the working-age population means that universal education would consume a larger share of GNP than in other regions (Colclough and Lewin 1993). This burden affects not only public finances—in countries that already face multiple challenges to resource mobilization—but also households, which typically meet a large proportion of education costs. Especially heavy are the demands on poor and rural households, which usually have many dependents.

Rapid population growth has consistently thwarted the goal of universal access to primary education in Africa. In 1961 African ministers of
Overcoming Adversity

The challenges of the African development context are daunting. Yet the experience of countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, Swaziland, and, in the years immediately following independence, Zimbabwe show how effectively a combination of sound macroeconomic management and effective investments in human resource development can overcome many of the constraints discussed in this chapter. The positive development context emerging in several countries on the continent is encouraging. Prospects are perhaps better today than at any other time in the past 10 years.

- Economic growth has resumed in many countries.
- An end to the crisis of unsustainable debt is in sight with expanded debt relief under the HIPC initiative.
- New technologies may help address problems of access and quality.
- The political landscape has changed in similarly dramatic ways: apartheid has ended; the press has more freedom; many countries have
made a rapid transition to elected governments; and increasing equity, participation, human rights, and good governance have received more attention.

- Between 1990 and 1994, 38 countries held competitive national elections. South Africa's democratically elected government is well established, and recent political change in Nigeria has improved development prospects greatly. Given the regional importance of these two countries, the effects of these changes could spread far beyond their national borders.
3. Country Responses: A Quantum Leap in Education Development

To break the vicious development cycle of the 1980s, meet the development challenges of the 21st century, and narrow the scientific and digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world, the region will need equitable, efficient, and high-quality education systems. This will require many African countries to make a quantum leap—a significant acceleration—in their education development over the next 10 years, with these priorities:

- Rapidly increasing the education attainment of the labor force by enrolling all school-age children in good primary schools.
- Gradually expanding access to the full basic education cycle for primary school graduates and giving youth and adults who lack essential literacy and numeracy skills the opportunity to participate in adult basic education programs.
- Enhancing the vocational and technical skills of youth and adults through continuous job-related skill development programs offered by demand-driven systems, including public and private providers.
- Preparing more selected students for further education, especially for scientific and technological careers, by strengthening math, science, and technology programs in secondary and post-secondary institutions.
- Revitalizing national research and development programs.

Business as usual will not achieve the desired results. Bold policy reforms—sustained over time and implemented in partnerships among national governments, civil society, and donors—will be essential. This is not an impossible challenge. Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe have made considerable strides in education development. Many more countries—for example Guinea, Mozambique, Senegal, and Uganda (box 3.1)—have started implementing far-reaching reforms. But countries will have to base such reforms on a comprehensive analysis of education issues and embed them in a macroeconomic development strategy. They will also need to identify policies and investment programs to achieve strategic objectives. And they will need to formulate implementation plans aimed at rapid progress and explicitly designed to take interventions to scale.

In formulating strategies and interventions, priority should go to promoting the balanced development of the sector, with attention to the linkages between all parts of the education system, from early childhood to post-graduate programs. At the same time, the system will not be able to contribute to national social and economic development goals without the strong basis of rapid progress toward universal primary education. Beyond the primary level, expansion will typically be more gradual and selective, in line with country-specific policies and targets. These policies will need to reflect a political consensus on priorities and tradeoffs based on available human and financial resources, development objectives, labor market signals, and social demand.

Second, African countries should formulate local strategies, policies, and reforms to accelerate education development rather than adopt international solutions customized to local conditions. However, knowledge and experience from other African countries and from outside Africa should strengthen and enlighten local strategies. This approach will allow countries to design programs that are appropriate, affordable, and sustainable without repeating the mistakes of others.

Third, strategy formulation is about choice. Countries can only accelerate education development if their reforms and investments focus on priority objectives and reflect a willingness to make difficult policy trade-offs. Typically, the most critical choices will be targeting public spending and selecting nontraditional modes of service delivery.

Fourth, Africa should formulate education strategies with explicit reference to wider poverty
Uganda's National Commitment to Basic Education

In 1994 the government of Uganda issued a white paper outlining its long-term vision for education reform. This paper set the stage for major policy reforms:

- Eliminating "ghost" teachers, increasing teacher salaries to realistic levels, and training and deploying teachers. The number of teachers on the payroll by a third and increased teacher pay tenfold over three years. Teacher competency tests were administered to all uncertified teachers. Those deemed trainable were to receive in-service upgrading and continuous professional support. Support to teachers is delivered by 560 tutors, each responsible for 20 schools.

- Decentralizing the responsibility for primary education to Uganda's 45 districts. Each district deploys and pays teachers, although it receives funds from the central government. The district level also manages classroom construction using a community demand approach.

- Liberalizing textbook procurement and provision in 1995. Schools can now choose from lists of books vetted by the Ministry of Education, in line with budget allocations based on enrollments. As a result an active private textbook publishing and marketing sector has emerged. As a step toward sustainable book provision, the government has allocated 3 percent of the recurrent education budget to instructional materials.

- Introducing free schooling in 1997 for up to four children per household. Schools are now funded through direct grants based on enrollments, and contributions to parent-teacher associations are voluntary. The reduced financial burden on families resulted in a doubling of primary enrollments, to 5.2 million. Piloting of multigrade teaching began in 1999 to bring smaller schools closer to communities in sparsely populated areas.

- Limiting the number of students in higher education who must pay for their courses. Today 75 percent of university students are privately sponsored by families or communities. Scholarships are targeted to students unable to afford the fees.

- Recruiting key staff through open competition to restructure the Ministry of Education. The government is taking steps to completely integrate project implementation enclaves, which serve donor-funded operations exclusively, into the main ministry in 2000. The government will use its evolving Education Strategic Investment Program to coordinate all future donor support to education in Uganda.

Implementation of the program has stayed mostly on track thanks to a massive political commitment and sustained budget support. Education was the principal electoral platform of president Museveni in 1996, and the share of education in the budget rose from 22 percent in 1995 to 31 percent in 1999. Yet the number of teachers in basic education cannot keep up with the enormous increase in enrollments. Learning achievement in many schools remains very low. Budget increases to fund more teachers, build more classrooms, and ensure adequate instructional materials are a high priority. Resources released through the HIPC initiative will be used for these purposes.
aims and budget needs of education strategies must be consistent with those of other sectors.

Progress toward these strategic priorities will require policy and institutional reforms that:

- Improve quality, measured by enhanced learning achievement and good instructional practice.
- Provide equitable access to learning opportunities.
- Build national, local, and school capacity to manage the delivery of education services.
- Ensure sustainable financing through a coherent system of complementary public and private financing and provision.

Below the main reform options and action priorities available to African policymakers are summarized, based on research findings and lessons from Africa and other regions (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; and other works cited in the text). Another important source was ADEA's stocktaking exercise, which brought together case studies of successful experiments in education development and suggests one promising approach to increasing national capacity to analyze and disseminate educational experiences within the continent (box 3.2).

Relentless Pursuit of Quality

Translating expanded education opportunities into meaningful development depends on whether people learn—acquire useful knowledge, reasoning abilities, skills, and values—as a result of those opportunities (World Conference on Education for All 1990). High participation rates and efficient student flows are necessary but imperfect indicators of education progress. Actual learning achievement is the real measure. Poor quality almost inevitably results in widespread repetition and numerous dropouts and discourages parents from enrolling their children. Often quality improvements are a prerequisite for increased enrollment.

As the intake ratio approaches 100 percent in many countries (see chapter 1), improving instruction to increase learning achievement and retention and survival rates will be critical for reaching the Education for All goal of universal enrollment in and completion of basic education. Investments in quality often provide the highest returns in education because they not only result in higher learning achievement but also partly pay for themselves through efficiency gains (International Consultative Forum on Education for All 1998; Harbison and Hanushek 1992).

Providing quality education is daunting because the knowledge and skills expected from graduates are changing. The success of education is increasingly judged by students' ability to apply knowledge, think independently, exercise appropriate judgment, and collaborate with others to make sense of new situations. The purpose of education is not simply to convey knowledge but to teach how to learn, solve problems, and synthesize the old and the new. Education policy is moving rapidly beyond its traditional concern with initial schooling of young people toward providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

To improve quality, countries first must ensure that the basic conditions for learning are in place. Curricula and instructional strategies must take into account the context of schooling and prepare students for the world of work and further learning. Teachers must be trained both in multigrade and monograde pedagogy and given necessary teaching materials and guides and regular professional support. Children must be ready for school when they enroll at the usual school age of six. Teachers should measure students' progress regularly. Schools in rural areas often will need more flexible curricula and teaching approaches, such as multigrade teaching, to meet the needs of poor, sparsely populated rural areas.

Learning environment

Effective instruction and high learning achievement require the following basic conditions:
Lessons from the “ADEA Prospective Stocktaking Review of Education in Africa”

In 1998 the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) invited African governments to produce country case studies of successful practice in advance of the ADEA biennial meeting in Johannesburg in December 1999. The aim of the exercise was to begin identifying education solutions and policy responses, from the African context, to well-known constraints and problems. Twenty-five countries responded. The synchronized findings from these studies reveal that the education sector in many African countries is rich in innovation and promising approaches. Key lessons that emerged included:

- The political context of education development is important. Governments need to be committed to closing income, gender, ethnic, and other social inequalities where these are barriers to education for all. Strong and sustained political commitment to universal basic education is vital, as is a set of core guiding principles and a clear vision of the direction of education development.

- Countries should be prepared to develop policy solutions as they progress and build capacity by “doing.” They need to make sure that planning does not slow implementation, and realize that everything need not be in place before implementation can start. Flexibility and a willingness to take risks are hallmarks of this approach.

- Education development is more likely to succeed if it is based on consensus among all the stakeholders. Education planning should be based on participatory principles, which foster a sense of ownership and understanding of policies.

- Accelerated education development depends on effective partnerships among government, donors, communities, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Each of these stakeholders can contribute a combination of ideas and finance to education development. Partnerships are also crucial at the international level, both within Africa and between Africa and other regions.

- Communities have a vital role to play in education development. They need opportunities to identify their education needs and priorities and to play a larger role in school management. Often decentralization reforms can help achieve this objective. Community participation should not jeopardize equity and efficiency objectives.

- Policy development and planning must be grounded in sound research and analysis. Education interventions should be founded on robust data and systematically monitored so that their impact is known and key policy lessons are internalized.

- All parts of the sector should be addressed holistically. Each country will need to establish an appropriate balance between the needs of each subsector and ensure synergy between different subsectoral interventions.

- Cost-effectiveness is a blind spot in the case studies. Without a full assessment of financing and management costs, the study could draw few conclusions about cost-effectiveness or the scope for taking innovations to scale. Strengthening the capacity for financial analysis in the education sector is an urgent priority in much of the region.

- Many of the innovations excessively stress expanding access and pay too little attention to improving quality. Interventions that neglect education quality are unlikely to be sustained, since low demand for education is closely related to poor quality provision.

Source: ADEA 1999b.
At least 800–1,000 hours of instruction each year. African countries cannot expect students to achieve the learning specified in most national curricula with only 400–500 hours of instruction.

Better supervision and more community monitoring, modified school calendars to better match agriculture calendars, and school health programs and meals. All these can help to bolster regular school functioning.

Enrollment at the usual age for school entry. Late enrollment—common after enrollment drives or in countries with biannual, triannual, or even less frequent admissions—usually leads to early dropouts, especially among girls (Lloyd, Mensch, and Clark 2000).

Access to adequate textbooks and other learning materials for every child. Effective instruction requires textbooks, notebooks, library books, wall charts, and maps. Despite donor support, few countries have established financially and institutionally sustainable systems for book provision. Textbook publishing has traditionally been a state monopoly in many African countries. This situation is changing because most countries recognize the importance of a thriving publishing industry, a network of private booksellers, and policies that give schools the authority and resources to choose between competing series offered by publishers.

Maximum student-teacher ratios of 40–45 students per teacher in primary education and 20–25 in upper secondary education. Class size should be kept within a reasonable range of the averages. Most African countries have student-teacher ratios at the high end of these ranges, although some have much higher averages. But in many countries the key challenge is to ensure the equitable distribution of teachers among schools and students. Redeploying teachers from administrative and other jobs to the classroom and from urban to rural areas has a low financial cost—although sometimes a high political price—and can increase instructional effectiveness considerably. Payment of reasonable salaries, on time, is also important.

Physical infrastructure meeting minimum standards for safety and comfort. Many African countries do not have enough classrooms to meet the demand for education. Existing schools are often in poor condition and lack clean water and basic sanitation. Well-maintained, clean, and attractive classrooms symbolize a commitment to quality education and are the hallmark of well-managed, effective schools. Sanitation and clean water provide a healthy learning environment and can be a significant factor in girls’ attendance.

Curricula and instruction strategies

Countries will need to explore flexible alternatives to the monograde teaching model—six classrooms and six teachers, with students attending school five hours a day, 200 days a year and mastering at entry the basic vocabulary and grammar of the language of instruction. African curricula, textbooks, teacher manuals, and teacher training are often designed around instructional objectives and assumptions that fit neither the operational constraints of the typical school nor the learning styles or needs of most students. In many countries curricula are overloaded with content and often stress knowledge of facts over strategies to promote understanding and application. Preparation for high-stakes examinations that determine access to the next level of education often drives instruction. Systematic assessment of student learning at classroom, school, and system levels is rare, limiting the scope for targeted reforms to improve learning outcomes.

Curricula rarely take into account the fact that most students enter school with little or no knowledge of the language of instruction. Students learn better when taught in their mother tongue. Studies have shown consistently that students learn to read
and acquire other academic skills faster in their own language (UNICEF 1999). But in many African countries fluency in a second language—French, English, or Portuguese—is an essential requirement for admission into secondary education and a key instructional objective of the primary curriculum. Studies of bilingual pilot programs in Mali and Niger suggest that children taught in their mother tongue learn a second language more quickly than children taught in a language other than that spoken at home (ADEA 1999b).

However, much of the evidence from mother-tongue pilots is tentative and derived from questionable methodology. These pilots urgently need stronger monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, cost and management constraints have made it difficult to scale up bilingual pilots. Bilingual programs typically require a broad range of materials and specially trained staff. And mother-tongue teaching, like the traditional instructional model, is unlikely to be effective without the basic conditions and resources for effective instruction.

Governments need to explore these resource issues fully when they review policy options on language of instruction. Language of instruction issues are also often politically and culturally contentious. Selecting one African language for instruction may marginalize social groups in linguistically diverse countries. Governments will also have to consider the demand for education in European languages, which many parents see as opening doors to further education and professional employment. In sum, instructional policies must begin with local language and culture to improve students’ performance, especially in the early grades when most children drop out and repeat grades. But successful implementation will also require an effective strategy for transition to a second language of instruction.

Many developing countries in Africa and elsewhere are questioning the effectiveness of the traditional model of schooling and are implementing other, often more comprehensive, alternative models. Mali’s pedagogie convergente, Colombia’s escuela nueva, and the schools of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee have yielded lessons for designing alternative approaches (World Bank 1996). The instructional strategies of these models reflect the linguistic and other experience of the children who enroll; allow children to proceed at their own pace; monitor learning carefully; promote cooperative learning and peer teaching; eliminate repetition; include strategies to deal with student absences; aim to develop citizen skills; and emphasize understanding, applying knowledge, and solving problems.

Preparing students for the world of work and lifelong learning involves teaching skills to analyze problems, synthesize information, and tackle a wide range of tasks. Primary students need core literacy, numeracy, and life skills, as well as communication skills and civic education. As the number of people infected with HIV/AIDS grows, students and youth need knowledge about HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention. Education on health issues, especially reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, should be an integral part of curricula.

The challenge beyond the primary level is to prepare students for a world that will demand advanced understanding and achievement in these areas, problem-solving skills, and the ability to learn. Most African countries will have to design secondary curricula and higher education programs to respond to these emerging priorities and align textbooks and teacher manuals with the new content and instructional strategies. Africa has already made progress in this regard. In Zimbabwe, for example, cost-effective teaching strategies promoted by the secondary school science project (ZIM-SCI)—which uses low-cost equipment, locally produced textbooks, and extensive in-service training—successfully expanded education access to scientific learning without compromising quality in the years immediately following independence. New technology provides further scope for developing cost-effective ways to deliver teacher training and teach advanced subjects at the secondary and university levels (box 3.3).
The World Links for Development Program

The World Links for Development (WorLD) program is a grant-based initiative sponsored by the World Bank Institute that uses the Internet to link secondary schools in Africa with counterpart schools for collaborative learning. The program's goals are to improve education opportunities for African students, develop technology skills among African youth to accelerate economic and social development, and build cultural understanding around the world.

Since 1997 WorLD has provided computer labs, Internet connections, and teacher training to more than 140 schools in seven African countries (Ghana, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe). The program has reached more than 600 teachers and 5,000 students. In 1999–2000 the program will expand to two more African countries, Burkina Faso and Botswana, working with at least 20 schools in each country. Senegal's Ministry of Education has requested WorLD support to design a nationwide education technology program. Over the next few years WorLD hopes to expand this collaboration with Bank operations to reach many more African teachers and students.

Vocational training must reflect the evolving world of work. Programs need to respond to the demands of employers and be flexible enough to help some students prepare for employment or apprenticeship in the formal or—more often—informal sector and help others prepare for self-employment.

Vocational training and technical education programs have a different dynamic from traditional secondary education and are best managed outside the formal education system (Middleton, Van Adams, and Ziderman 1993). Programs often need to be tailored to the requirements of a specific clientele, with duration and delivery mode guided by instructional objectives. In many countries private providers—employers as well as for-profit and nonprofit agencies—already play a central role in skills development. The policy challenge in developing effective vocational training and technical education programs is creating an environment in which public and private providers can compete with and complement each other in responding to the demand of a clientele with widely different training needs.

Trained and motivated teachers

To improve the quality of teaching in Africa, teachers' salaries must be paid on time and must cover the cost of living to allow teachers to
commit themselves full time to teaching. Work conditions—administrative and management support and the availability of teaching materials, supplies, and equipment—must enable teachers to carry out their work as expected. Professional recognition and support will help motivate teachers once the first two conditions are met. Finally, teacher training needs radical reform so that teachers acquire the skills and motivation to apply better instructional methods.

Practice-oriented pre-service training, continuous demand-driven in-service training, and instructional leadership by principals can enhance teaching skills (Craig, Kraft, and du Plessis 1998). Many countries will have to reevaluate pre-service and in-service training. Teacher training can no longer be perceived as an extension of secondary education, only loosely connected to rural classroom conditions and practice. In-service training cannot continue to be an event that teachers participate in for a few days every 5–10 years.

Several countries are exploring shorter pre-service training, longer classroom practice, and continuous in-service training (box 3.4), often through a network of decentralized resource centers complemented by school-based support from headmasters and inspectors or special resource providers. In all these models, teacher training becomes a process of lifelong learning. New opportunities are arising as new technological change makes it possible to support teacher education programs with quality audiovisual materials, transmitted over the Internet or in more traditional ways, including audio and video cassettes (box 3.5).

The quality of staff at the secondary and higher levels is equally important. Secondary teachers are often underqualified or too narrowly qualified to teach more than one subject, leading to gross inefficiencies in teacher deployment—apparent in large class sizes and low student-teacher ratios. More and more university faculty members lack Ph.D.s. Qualified teachers—especially in math, science, and technology—are rare, reflecting an inadequate supply of graduates in these disciplines and more attractive income-earning opportunities outside the education sector. As a result appropriately qualified staff are difficult to recruit and retain.

Many countries need to consider upgrading staff, creating more attractive employment conditions, recruiting part-time staff or staff with non-

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**Box 3.4**

**Guinea’s Pre-service Teacher Education Project**

To achieve “Education for All” Guinea will need to recruit about 25,000 new teachers over the next 12 years. To increase the efficiency of training and the quality of new teachers, the government needs new approaches to pre-service teacher education. Two new approaches were piloted in 1998:

- Short-term intensive summer courses, for which teachers received provisional certification. For permanent certification, teachers must participate in in-service training within a specified period.
- An intensive program lasting an entire school year and focusing on classroom practice, with student-teachers spending 30–40 percent of their time in primary school classrooms, followed by teacher mentoring and linked in-service training.

By August 1999 the teacher education program had trained more than 3,000 new teachers—20 times as many as were trained in the year before the program started. The teachers trained in the intensive summer course in 1998 helped increase 1998–99 enrollments by 52,000 students, more than half of them girls. In 1999, 1,500 more trained teachers began teaching, and the program planned to train 3,000 more teachers during the 1999–2000 school year.
Box 3.5

Technology and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Under the right conditions, technology—including traditional technology—can help remove the constraints of distance, time, and underqualified teachers on the delivery of education services. While many of the new computer-based technologies are inaccessible to African schools for cost and infrastructure reasons, these technologies have such great potential that Africa should explore their cost-effectiveness, especially at the secondary and university levels and for teacher training. Some of the most promising applications of education technology are described below.

Primary education
The primary school has no technology-based alternative, but technology can enrich primary instruction and help teachers fill gaps in subject matter knowledge. Interactive Radio Instruction in Lesotho and South Africa broadcasts highly structured lessons with periodic pauses for student responses or learning activities. The program has been an effective tool for improving the quality of English and mathematics teaching in primary classrooms. Despite its success, however, few countries have adopted Interactive Radio Instruction because of high program development costs, annual recurrent costs of as much as $2–3 a year, and the difficulty of adjusting school schedules to the broadcasts.

Secondary education
Distance education can be a cost-effective education alternative for students who fail to gain admission to traditional secondary school. Distance education courses are typically delivered through printed self-instruction materials supported and supplemented by radio broadcasts and study centers. The Malawi College of Distance Education for many years provided a good model of this strategy. Examination pass rates were low but roughly equivalent to those of the traditional schools. Unfortunately, funding constraints forced the college to discontinue radio broadcasts and limited its ability to provide materials.

Television also can expand access to secondary education and improve its quality. Telesecundaria is a television-based rural system in Mexico that offers secondary education as part of the national system. Several other countries have adopted the program, and some are making it available to secondary schools in remote areas to enrich and improve instruction, especially in math and science. Regional collaboration would result in economies of scale and drive down cost per student.

Teacher training
Teacher training is among Africa's most formidable education challenges. Education technologies can help address this challenge. Teacher training accounts for the bulk of distance education activity in Africa, using a combination of printed materials, radio, audio and video cassettes, and—increasingly—the Internet. Typically, teacher resource and study centers and district education offices serve as venues for face-to-face training supported by traditional technologies as well as computer and Internet access (Roberts and Associates 1998). Using education technologies in distance teacher training has multiple benefits. Where there are economies of scale, distance teacher training is cheaper than conventional approaches.

Over the past 10 years in-service teacher training has used new technologies and taken advantage of the scope they offer for regional and international collaboration. For example, in West Africa the Gambia College, the National Teachers College in Nigeria, the University of Ghana, and the Freetown Teachers College in Sierra Leone share learning materials and
expertise in teacher training and other distance education programs. Similarly, the African Network for Distance Learning (RESAFAD), a consortium of technology-oriented agencies in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, and Togo, uses the Internet for distance training of school principals.

Applying new technologies to distance education can also improve gender equity among teaching staff by giving women home-based training opportunities and giving teachers both a way to communicate and share experiences with colleagues and access to a wealth of study materials.

**Higher education**

Distance teaching can expand the pool of university graduates and people with advanced degrees (see box 3.12). In addition, Internet access can facilitate participation in the international research community. Meanwhile, digital libraries are a cost-effective way to expand the range of resources available to students and academics and to allow universities to participate in global knowledge networks. For example, Pennsylvania State University in the United States can provide a comprehensive digital collection of resources for $1.2 million, one-tenth of the cost of a conventional library (World Bank 2000a).

**Lifelong learning**

An important private sector in African urban areas provides training in the application of a wide range of computer technologies. Moreover, the World Bank-supported Global Distance Learning Network trains public and private sector managers. Several African countries are developing community information and learning centers that offer telephone, fax, and increasingly e-mail and Internet access, usually for a small fee. These centers may be able to provide learning opportunities for people in remote areas.

traditional backgrounds, and using distance education technologies and self-instructional materials. New Internet-based technologies (see box 3.5) hold considerable promise for delivering affordable in-service programs to large numbers of teachers and university faculty.

**New technologies**

Attempts to improve education access and quality through technologies—distributing printed materials by surface mail, radio, and television—have proved disappointing. Taking even demonstrably successful pilot projects to scale often has been difficult. Without continuing external support, few countries have been able to sustain the higher cost per student of programs to improve the quality of education. Expanding education access through electronic media can only reduce unit cost through economies of scale that require large target audiences, rarely available within the national boundaries of Sub-Saharan African countries, and that also push up total expenditures. In other cases, to be financially sustainable, programs have to shift costs to students, who then pay for a service that students in traditional schools usually receive free.

Technologies often have been inflexible, and teachers have felt that the technologies take classroom control away from them. Finally, administrative and program design skills to support education technology are often in short supply. The new information and communication technologies—personal computers, wireless communication, and the Internet—may remove some of these constraints, but their large-scale application requires the same preconditions as that of the old technologies:
• Changes in the cost structure of education systems, especially increases in nonsalary expenditures and declining reliance on external funding.
• Institutions with the financial and human resources to design high-quality programs, deliver them efficiently to target audiences, and provide training and application support to teachers.
• Regional and subregional cooperation to realize economies of scale essential to reduce unit cost.

Moreover, much of Sub-Saharan Africa lacks the power and telecommunications infrastructure to realize the potential of the new technologies. Also, although the cost of new technologies is falling rapidly, cost is still a barrier to widespread application in the poorest countries. Many countries will have to reform their telecommunications and power sectors before they can take education applications of new technologies to scale. Finally, education television and computer-assisted instruction are likely to be high risk if they involve leading-edge technology: education will probably be more successful in terms of cost and servicing of equipment if it follows rather than leads entertainment and commerce (Perraton and Creed 2000).

Student readiness

The quality of early childhood development programs—especially those that include health and nutrition interventions—correlates overwhelmingly with primary school enrollment rates, enrollment age, academic performance, and dropout and repetition rates. The introduction of school readiness activities in early childhood development programs for four- and five-year-olds and instruction policies that begin with local language and culture are crucial in improving the performance of students in the first grade, where dropout and repetition rates are often high. Early childhood development programs also help ensure that children move on to primary school when they have reached the official entry age. The impact of these programs can be enhanced by complementary activities that facilitate community management and influence the competencies and behavior of adults and older siblings who shape young children’s environments.

Early childhood development programs cover only 5 percent of African children below the age of six. Given the critical role of such programs in raising enrollments and improving learning outcomes, early childhood development deserves more support as part of a balanced approach to education development (box 3.6). Because of the pay-off of better performance in primary school and the reduction of repetition and drop-out, low-cost early childhood development programs can pay for themselves. Community-based models of early childhood education and care in Latin American countries have shown that such programs can be low cost and effective. In these models parents are usually responsible for providing physical facilities and instructors or facilitators. Government agencies, often in collaboration with NGOs, train the parents and facilitators, organize regular health checkups, and provide instructional materials, medicine, and nutrition support.

A number of African countries are developing similar programs. In Zanzibar, Tanzania community-managed and -funded Islamic schools provide early childhood learning to almost 80 percent of the relevant age group. Some community groups have worked with international NGOs to improve the learning environment in these schools and introduce elements of secular education to prepare children to move into the primary school system. These successful experiences teach two important lessons about promoting student readiness. First, early childhood development programs need to approach child development comprehensively, incorporating cognitive, health, and nutrition needs. Second, for a strong sense of community ownership, programs need to be sensitive to cultural values. Programs that take local culture and practices into account are more likely to be sustainable, affordable, and accessible.
Good health and nutrition are also essential for children in primary school. Experiments are underway in a number of countries to pilot low-cost ways to target school health programs to the poorest and most disadvantaged children.

**Measuring progress**

Effective reform programs need reliable data on inputs and outcomes of education investments and on classroom processes. The absence of such data, a problem not unique to the Africa region, seriously impedes effective remedial action when students do not meet standards for learning achievement or when pilots or innovations are introduced. Although standard indicators on inputs (enrollments, teachers, and schools) and student flows are usually available, they are often unreliable or insufficiently detailed. For example, despite a major international effort to assess progress on key indicators for the Education for All 2000 assessment, only a third of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa could provide data on pre-primary enrollments, half did not have age-specific data to calculate net enrollment ratios, and a quarter did not have data on girls' participation.

Moreover, information about what actually happens in schools and classrooms—teaching methods, use of instructional materials, and patterns of student interaction—is often not collected and analyzed regularly. Evaluations of innovations are often superficial and questionable. In particular, outcomes of pilots are rarely related to cost—incomprehensible in a region where almost all education systems face severe resource constraints. The 1999 stocktaking exercise of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa documented this point convincingly. These shortcomings inhibit effective reforms, not least because countries cannot easily gauge the impact of policies and expenditures or the scope for taking pilots to scale without rigorous assessment of student learning or financial and management costs.

Several African countries, recognizing the importance of measuring education inputs and outcomes, participate in initiatives sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to improve national education statistics and monitor student learning through standardized tests (box 3.7). In francophone countries the Program to Analyze Education Systems implements similar initiatives.

### Box 3.6

**Early Childhood Development in Kenya**

Ill health and poor nutrition during infancy and early childhood are major factors in the late enrollment, low success, and high dropout rates among Kenya's poorest school-age children. To improve the physical and intellectual development of these children, in 1997 the Ministry of Education, together with District Centers for Early Childhood Development and the National Center for Early Childhood Education, established a comprehensive early childhood development program in poor communities in partnership with the World Bank.

The program provides teacher training for some 17,000 early childhood development instructors who have no formal training; workshops to raise parental and community awareness and support for early childhood development programs; nutrition and health services targeted to infants in 10 districts; community grants for 2,000 community-operated early childhood development centers; and capacity building in monitoring and management in the Ministry of Education. More than a million children from poor households should benefit from the program, which will improve school enrollment, attendance, and achievement rates of lower primary school students.
Southern African Consortium for the Measurement of Educational Quality

Lack of technical capacity has kept African countries from participating in comparative international assessments of learning achievement. To remedy this situation, a few countries in southern Africa recently formed the Southern African Consortium for the Measurement of Educational Quality. In a promising example of what can be achieved through regional cooperation, five of these countries (Mauritius, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) have carried out sample-based national assessments of reading in grade 6 of primary school.

The exercise was supported by the International Institute of Educational Planning. The assessments’ adherence to high technical standards allowed these countries to compare learning achievement with that of other countries at a similar level of development. For each country the exercise generated detailed reports on progress in reading and related this information to key variables, including the child’s socioeconomic background and the school environment.

The results? Pupils performed poorly when judged by standards of mastery set by national reading experts and selected grade 6 teachers. Achievement differences within countries tended to surpass those between countries. Differences between regions, socioeconomic groups, and school location (rural or urban) were much more important than gender differences. A second exercise to measure learning outcomes in other subjects and other grades is being undertaken for an expanded group including francophone countries.

Unwavering Commitment to Equity

Unless widely and equitably available, effective basic education will not boost social and economic development. Today’s out-of-school children are typically members of hard-to-reach disadvantaged groups, almost always poor (Filmer and Pritchett 1999), and often in remote areas. Nearly 60 percent of out-of-school children in Africa are girls.

Countries need targeted strategies that stimulate demand, remove administrative obstacles to schooling, and adapt curricula and instructional strategies to rural conditions. Opportunities for learning and advanced education must reflect equity concerns to avoid perpetuating socially embedded disparities based on gender, region, or other groupings. Africa will have to close the rural-urban...
gap to make rapid progress toward education for all. Gross enrollment ratios in urban areas, especially capital cities, are typically much higher than those in rural areas; for example, 90 percent in Niamey, Niger, 85 percent in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and 80 percent in Bamako, Mali, compared with 20 percent or less in the rural areas of these countries. Living in rural areas usually affects school enrollment more than gender (figure 3.1).

Parents in rural areas often are asked to contribute more than parents in urban areas to the cost of schooling. Their contribution can take the form of labor, usually for school construction and maintenance, or payment of official and unofficial fees and levies. In many community schools in countries such as Chad, these fees must cover the salaries of teachers hired by parents. Rural disadvantage is reflected not only in the high household cost of education but also in the poor quality of rural education. Teacher absenteeism is more common in rural than in urban areas, especially where staff must travel long distances to collect salaries. The educational attainment of staff is typically lower, and textbooks and other instructional materials are supplied erratically or not at all. Classrooms are often poorly built and unusable during the rainy season. These factors result in low student learning and high failure rates in secondary school entrance exams.

Education inequalities between males and females is a further challenge if Africa is to accelerate its education development. The gender gap in the primary gross enrollment ratio in Africa stood at 13.6 percentage points in 1995—lower than in the Middle East and North Africa (16.1 percent) and South Asia (23.4 percent) but considerably higher than in East Asia and Latin America. The regional gender gap conceals considerable country variation. In 11 countries (Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, and Togo) the gap in the primary gross enrollment ratio exceeds 20 percentage points.

Within countries differences in female participation rates largely relate to urban-rural disparities. A long journey to school is a major obstacle to the enrollment of girls because of the perceived dangers involved and the opportunity cost of losing female labor to perform household chores, care for young children or sick family members, and work on family land. Thus a key priority for much of Africa is to increase the initial enrollment of girls in rural areas, both for social equity and the positive impact girls’ education has on agricultural productivity, fertility, family health, nutrition, and the schooling of the next generation.

Raising female enrollment rates will require carefully targeted programs involving supply-side inter-

![Figure 3.1 Primary Enrollment Ratios by Grade for Rural and Urban Children in Niger](image-url)
Success Factors in Girls' Schooling

The widespread gender enrollment gap in developing country education systems has been the focus of considerable research and policy discussion in recent years. However, gender relations in the classroom have not received the same attention. To understand the key factors in girls' performance at the primary level, the World Bank studied interventions in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Mauritania. The study showed that girls perform better when:

Parents
- Make a deliberate effort to reduce the workload at home.
- Give girls time and space to do their homework.
- Are involved in the child's school life and follow her work at home.
- Request tutoring by a family member or by a teacher or a neighbor.

Teachers
- Do not shout at students or humiliate them.
- Call on girls to contribute to classes even when they do not volunteer.
- Do not underestimate girls' ability.
- Work with students' families to tutor them and provide further support.
- Receive gender sensitivity training or have many years of experience.

Grassroots initiatives such as the following help girls stay in school:
- Parent-teacher associations sensitize neighbors to the importance of girls' education, contribute to school construction and maintenance, and work with school administrators to solve discipline problems.
- Mothers of Students Associations in Burkina Faso, whose main objective is to raise enrollment and success rates, particularly of girls, offer encouragement, advice, and financial support for girls in school.

The study results also showed that girls are more likely to participate actively in classes taught in the local language, and that religious traditions need not be a barrier to gender equity in education. Islamic Mauritania, for example, has more than halved the gender enrollment gap to only 6 percent at the primary level over the past five years.

Zimbabwe, and Zanzibar, Tanzania found no difference between boys’ and girls’ reading (Saito 1998). Clearly more research is needed on how and how much late enrollment, dropping out early, and in-school factors affect girls’ school performance.

While cultural constraints frequently contribute to education inequalities, recent research suggests that poor parents in rural areas are more ready than previously thought to enroll their children—including girls—in school, provided the schools are of acceptable quality, fairly close to home, and affordable (Glewwe 1994; PROBE Team 1999). Building schools closer to girls’ homes is often an effective way to redress many gender inequalities. Closer schools reduce the opportunity costs of girls’ schooling, accommodate absences more easily, and make interaction with teachers less formal and threatening, so that girls find it easier to enroll and stay in school.

These research findings also suggest that a significant obstacle to greater equity in education has been the failure to adapt the traditional six-classroom, six-teacher school to local conditions. Expecting children to enroll at a specific age and come to school in uniform with textbooks and basic supplies does not fit the constraints faced by poor people in low-density rural areas, especially in the Sahelian countries and parts of East Africa. These problems are particularly serious in areas where nomadic customs prevent children from regularly attending traditional schools. In many parts of rural Africa alternative models such as mobile schools and multigrade schools are more appropriate for these children (box 3.9). Multigrade schooling is especially effective if instruction is personalized and based on cooperative learning and peer tutoring. Multigrade pedagogical training and specially designed materials are essential for the success of such an approach. Such instruction helps eliminate grade repetition, accommodates student absences, and allows students to proceed at their own pace.

Several Latin American countries, following the lead of Colombia’s escuela nueva, implement this approach to rural schooling.

After teacher salaries, infrastructure is the largest cost associated with the provision of schooling and can add 25–50 percent to operating costs. To provide places in school for all school-age children, African countries will need to build more than 150,000 new classrooms a year, many in rural areas, over the next 15 years. To ensure the access of children in sparsely populated areas, education will have to be provided in schools with three or fewer classrooms. Many of Africa’s school construction programs have been unnecessarily costly (an initial review of World Bank projects suggests that the cost of classroom construction in Africa is two to three times the cost in South Asia) and not designed for the needs of rural areas. Achieving universal access to primary education will require involving communities and NGOs in constructing small, dispersed facilities. This strategy could build many classrooms at a much lower cost and increase enrollments without compromising safety or learning.

Strategies to involve communities in school construction are part of a broader shift toward decentralized planning, resource management, and delivery. This shift is based on the recognition that highly centralized education systems are unlikely to meet the needs of rural, disadvantaged, and hard-to-reach groups. Expanding the role of district education offices and communities requires a shift both in resources and responsibilities linked to concerted capacity building efforts.

Rapid progress toward universal education also will require many more teachers. In 1995 Sub-Saharan Africa had about 3 million teachers, representing 3.6 percent of the nonagricultural labor force. Two-thirds of these teachers taught at the primary level. More than half of the region’s primary teachers are likely to leave the teaching force in the next 15 years. At least 1 million additional teachers will be required to achieve universal primary education by 2015, meaning that African countries will have to train about 200,000 new teachers a year for the next 15 years, assuming an attrition rate of 2.5 percent. This number is probably underestimated,
Nigeria—Developing Education Programs for Nomads

Nomad communities account for 8.5 percent of Nigeria’s population, or 9.3 million people. One-third of this population is of school age, and until recently few nomadic children received an education. As a result literacy rates among nomad groups range from 0.2-2.0 percent. Nomads face a range of constraints to higher levels of educational attainment. The constant search for pasture, and among coastal communities, for fish, together with the importance of child labor, make most formal and nonformal education systems ill-suited to the nomadic way of life.

Recognizing these constraints, the government created the National Commission for Nomadic Education in 1989. The commission is responsible for providing nomads with functional and relevant education and improving their survival skills.

The commission first gathered accurate baseline data to provide a solid foundation for developing alternative models to meet the needs of nomad children. These models include primary education in collapsible mobile classrooms and boat schools, extension adult education classes, and radio listening groups. Alternative curricula have been developed using flexible timetables, and teachers have been recruited from the nomad communities and given specialist training. Communities have a central role in managing the schools, and the program has collaborated with NGOs and donors.

Enrollment results have been impressive, with 155,000 children enrolled in 1998 compared with 18,000 in 1990. The proportion of girls enrolled has also risen markedly, the parity rate reaching 85 percent in 1998. Adult literacy classes now enroll 2,600 women across 12 states.

Challenges remain: quality is poor, and the proportion of trained teachers has fallen since the system rapidly expanded. Funding is insufficient to provide every school with books for the new curricula, and as a result many children are taught the sedentary school curriculum. Dropout rates are exceptionally high, with fewer than one-fifth of children graduating in the allotted time. Some problems are beyond the control of the commission. In many areas violence between nomads and farmers has prevented communities from participating in educational programs. Despite these challenges, the program has demonstrated that if school models are adapted to the needs of nomad communities, demand for education is high.

given the high attrition rates among teachers in the countries worst affected by HIV/AIDS. Such demand outstrips the capacity of traditional teacher training institutions, especially in countries with low gross enrollment ratios. In many cases countries will need alternative, cost-effective strategies to train large numbers of additional teachers to accelerate education development (see box 3.4).

In sum, education systems that continue to operate in traditional ways are unlikely to achieve universal primary education. Neither are systems that concentrate policymaking, resource allocation decisions, and implementation responsibility in a small group of officials in central education ministries. Nor will universal primary education be achieved without strategies that explicitly target the needs and constraints of excluded groups such as the poor, rural populations, and girls. Meaningful progress will require:

- Developing models of quality schooling appropriate for rural conditions.
- Developing education strategies that address the demand- and supply-side obstacles facing hard-to-reach groups.
• Mobilizing and empowering communities to manage classroom construction and be actively involved in school operations.
• Increasing in-service training of teachers and restructuring the teaching profession, with decentralized provision of teacher support.
• Decentralizing planning and resource management responsibilities to communities and district education offices.

Without equity in access to quality primary education, significant progress in equity at higher levels is impossible. Countries must ensure that girls have the same opportunities as boys to continue their education beyond the basic cycle. Marriage customs and cultural practices associated with the onset of puberty are often serious obstacles to girls’ education. Overcoming these demand-side obstacles will require determined efforts by those who influence public opinion and political and religious leaders.

Policy options include separate schools for girls, scholarships for girls, and strategies to shorten distances between homes and schools. Countries also will have to improve the participation and performance of girls in math and science classes. Girls account for less than 25 percent of all students enrolled in these classes in Burkina Faso. In Chad in 1997–98 only 4 percent of the students enrolled in science were girls. Girls also have a lower success rate than boys in science subjects (UNESCO 1998b). Tutoring and exposure to role models are possible remedies for this problem. Females are most underrepresented in higher education, as a direct result of their disadvantage at the secondary level. Affirmative action programs in higher education may help, but a lasting solution depends both on tackling equity issues with determination at the primary and secondary levels and on developing more flexible models of learning at higher education levels that allow women to combine study with household responsibilities. Where such approaches have been developed, they have successfully expanded opportunities for women and other groups with traditionally limited access to higher education (box 3.10).

Even if all children ages 6–11 were enrolled in school today and all completed the primary cycle, Africa would need as long as 25 years to raise the average educational attainment of its adult population to five years. Thus the region needs to give adults and youths who have not attended school, or who have dropped out early, the opportunity to continue their education and acquire skills needed in work and society. Expanding educational opportunities for Africa’s 140 million illiterate adults, and for millions more whose education has been limited in duration and quality, is an imperative on both equity and human development grounds in particular, as one of the most important effects of adult basic education is the support that successful participants provide for the schooling of their children. Continuing education programs should develop not only literacy and occupational skills, but also life skills in areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention.

While the importance of adult basic education programs for accelerating education development is widely accepted, such programs have a variable track record. Many have had high dropout and low pass rates, although recent approaches have improved these rates considerably. However, the lack of good data and evaluation constraints judging the effectiveness of such programs (Oxenham and Aoki 1999; Lauglo 2000). The evidence that is available suggests that adult basic education programs are more effective if they target specific audiences, receive strong support from government, and maximize opportunities to develop partnerships between government and NGOs. Several countries have involved NGOs by contracting out basic education programs (box 3.11) or inviting NGO participation in national programs (Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda). Instructors who receive a stipend—and sometimes volunteer instructors—usually deliver these programs in national languages.
The Dual System of Face-to-Face and Distance Education at the University of Namibia

The distance education degree program offered by the Center for External Studies at the University of Namibia is a promising example of how distance education programs can expand opportunities to groups who have traditionally had little or no access to higher education. Since political independence in 1990, distance learning has been a key dimension of the University of Namibia’s expansion program. The dual system—offering the same qualifications to full-time and distance learners—reflects the government’s commitment to make every level of education available to people excluded under the apartheid regime.

Since 1997 the Center for External Studies has offered diploma courses in education and Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Nursing degrees, and in 1998 introduced a Bachelor of Business Administration degree on a pilot basis. The Bachelor of Education course was designed to increase the numbers of highly qualified secondary teachers in the priority subjects of math and English, while the nursing course was a pragmatic response to the fact that the Ministry of Health could no longer afford to release trained nurses for full-time upgrading. The university hopes that intermediate qualifications will motivate external students for whom a six-year part-time course can be daunting.

The program has benefited from widespread collaboration with other institutions. Courses were bought from the Polytechnic of Namibia, the British Open University, and the Cambridge National Extension College to supplement existing courses. Links with the University of South Africa and British institutions funded by the Commonwealth of Learning enhanced capacity building. Nine regional program centers across the country collect student fees, organize face-to-face sessions, handle examinations, and advertise courses among local communities. Distance learners now account for a third of University of Namibia students. The Center for External Studies has been particularly effective in reaching women. Seventy-five percent of distance learners are women, many of whom would be unable to attend traditional campus-based programs because of household responsibilities.

Costs are met entirely by the students and are set at the same level as for full-time students. As a result the center is 40–50 percent self-financing. While student retention and test results are not as high as for full-time students, dropout rates have fallen markedly, so that 80 percent of distance learners now complete their courses. Pass rates among distance students have also improved, reaching almost 70 percent in 1998. Students and academics agree that the distance learning program has maintained quality. The key lessons from Namibia’s dual-mode distance learning program? Strong leadership from the highest university level and an emphasis on staff development, decentralization, and quality control can make a significant contribution to expanding access to higher education in Africa without compromising quality.

Up-Front Emphasis on Institutional Strengthening

Accelerating education development almost always requires an explicit action plan to strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions to design and deliver education development programs. To deliver education effectively and efficiently all stakeholders need sensible incentives and must operate according to reasonable and transparent rules within efficient organizational structures and with competent staff.
Box 3.11

Providing Basic Education Opportunities to Reduce Illiteracy: Senegal's Experience

Senegal’s Literacy Program Prioritizing the Participation of Women (PAFP) is part of the National Directorate of Literacy and Basic Education’s national literacy program. The program supports functional and post-literacy courses in five regions of Senegal and periurban areas of Dakar. Since 1995 PAFP has reached more than 150,000 learners. In the most recent (fifth) intake for the functional literacy courses, 54,000 enrolled.

The post-literacy program has enrolled 15,500 learners in three intakes. Demand is large: 183,000 applied at the last intake. More than 80 percent of the learners are 15–39 years old, and about three-quarters are women. A major achievement of the program is the low dropout rate, estimated at 10 percent.

The functional literacy classes provide at least 300 hours of instruction in local languages over 18 months for at least 20 people per class. Providers can choose from a list of curricula approved by the Ministry of Education. PAFP also supports local newspapers in each region in the local language and projects related to agriculture, health, and the environment. PAFP plans a link to microcredit access and to local learning resource centers, which will serve a target group wider than the program’s own participants. Of the total volume of PAFP publications (101 books/booklets, including a dictionary in Wolof) 187,000 copies have been sold.

Teaching is outsourced to more than 420 local nongovernment providers, up from 77 providers in 1995. The increase shows that a rapidly growing market of training providers can be created over a short period. Prospective literacy operators submit applications according to a procedures manual and are screened and nominated by a national selection board appointed by the minister of education. Financial management of the contractual relations with operators (and some routine monitoring) has been outsourced to AGETIP, a state parastatal agency experienced in project administration. Through its executing agency, the ministry concentrates on planning and program design, program implementation (including training of the operators), capacity development, and quality assurance. Every 10 classes has a supervisor. The National Directorate of Literacy and Basic Education is primarily responsible for evaluating and monitoring the national literacy program of which PAFP is part. Each contracting NGO hires its own teachers, most of whom are locally recruited and have a lower secondary school diploma.

Accountability of providers to beneficiaries is increasingly recognized as central to institutional effectiveness in the public sector (World Bank 1999b). In education this finding has led to a move away from traditional, highly centralized management models. Several countries are deconcentrating management authority to field-level government officials responsible for specific geographic areas (Crooke 1997). Others are searching for ways to increase autonomy at the level of the school, training center, or university. A few are doing both.

As more countries assign responsibility for managing education delivery to subnational levels and institutions, they need to redefine roles and responsibilities and establish new incentive systems and financial and personnel management rules. Capacity building will involve all levels of the system. At the national level the priority will be to strengthen the capacity to analyze key sector issues, plan national policy and institutional reforms, and support their implementation.

Equally important are capacities to establish benchmarks for policy reform and to monitor and
evaluate progress toward these benchmarks. In particular, countries need stronger research and development capacities to experiment with and pilot programs, develop curricula and instructional materials, formulate teacher training programs, and design school facilities.

At the local and institutional level they will need to develop capacity for new responsibilities such as allocating resources, managing teaching staff, and planning and implementing investment programs.

Several countries are experimenting with empowering communities to manage the delivery of education services either partially or completely. These experiments typically involve establishing or revitalizing school management committees, parent-teacher associations, or village education committees and allowing them to decide how to use public subsidies and community resources. Such decisions have often been limited to school construction but increasingly involve nonsalary operating costs and other service delivery issues. Where communities are given a greater role in education management, support for community-level capacity building is usually a condition of success (Colletta and Perkins 1995).

Some countries have gone even further, allowing communities to decide on the hiring and firing of teachers. Others have asked communities to develop school improvement plans that can be funded from public resources. In a number of African countries communities have started their own schools without public subsidies. However, these facilities, while a testimony to the commitment of poor, mostly rural communities to education, are generally of low quality and are attended by a minority of children, usually from poor families. Because they provide services that the state typically provides free to wealthier parents in urban areas, these schools have a regressive effect on public spending counter to the central education equity objective of excluding no child from education opportunities for financial reasons. Even where governments provide public subsidies with the expectation of complementary community contributions, poor households should not face excessive burdens that will risk excluding disadvantaged children.

Often governments can use public funds to contract private providers of essential education services. This is a good way to reduce the burden on public institutions without jeopardizing equity objectives because it concentrates government provision on activities with no alternative providers (see box 3.10). Government agencies can then focus on policy, planning, and contract management, turning to service delivery only where private providers are not cost-effective. Several countries are exploring ways to contract the delivery of adult basic education and vocational programs to parastatal or private providers.

Similarly, analysts and university administrators agree on the benefits of making universities responsible for managing their resources and defining institutional policy. The nature of needed policy reforms is reasonably clear and accepted by most stakeholders, but the political will and sustained support for these urgent changes is often lacking. Some countries, however, are making progress in this direction. Universities in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal have started on the reform path. Uganda's Makerere University is probably Africa's most impressive example of institutional reform in higher education (box 3.12).

Urgent reform of the management and financing of higher education needs to be accompanied in many countries by a radical rethinking of approaches to broadening university access. Most African countries cannot maintain current university enrollment levels of under 5 percent. The emergence of a globally integrated knowledge-based economy, and the need for lifelong learning opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills and maintain their competitiveness, are creating new pressures to raise university enrollments. Yet with severe resource and management constraints,
expanding the traditional residential campus model—students pursuing a full-time degree course for three or more years—is unlikely to be feasible.

Instead Africa needs new institutional arrangements that can overcome current cost, access, and quality problems in higher education and enable its universities to compete successfully with institutions in other countries that recruit students from a global pool through distance education programs. The region also needs more flexible and cost-effective learning models that harness new technologies and allow students to enter degree programs that combine work and study. Access to computers is only part of the solution. Countries that want to take advantage of new technologies will need to invest in curriculum-related software. An example of this approach is the Confederation of Open Learning Institutions in South Africa (COLISA), a partnership of the country’s three main higher education distance learning institutions. COLISA is developing Internet-based courseware, a Web-based student-teacher interaction system, and a series of local Internet access points for students. Such experiments offer scope for enhancing access to higher education without compromising quality.

Traditional universities are testing promising innovations using new technology to deliver quality education services. For example, the African Virtual University is beginning to deliver high-quality degree courses in science, engineering, and business through satellite networks (box 3.13). Open universities are also broadening access to higher education through more traditional means, as in Namibia (see box 3.10).

Strengthening institutions and implementing education reforms and related investments will take time—often as long as 10–15 years. The time frame for performance targets, development objectives, and financial and institutional sustainability goals should reflect this long-term view. Implementation strategies will have to be explicitly designed to learn from experience and to support programs long enough to allow them to build capacity. The timeframe for institutional strengthening illustrates the importance of long-term government-donor partnerships. In addition,
Box 3.13

The African Virtual University

The African Virtual University, a university without walls, uses modern information and communication technologies to give the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa direct access to some of the world’s highest quality academic faculty and learning resources. The African Virtual University bridges the digital divide by training world-class scientists, engineers, technicians, business managers, and other professionals who will promote economic and social development and help Africa leapfrog into the knowledge age.

Since the launch of its pilot phase in 1997, with World Bank support the African Virtual University has provided students and professionals in 15 African countries more than 2,500 hours of interactive instruction in English and French. More than 12,000 students have completed semester-long courses in engineering and the sciences, and over 2,500 professionals have attended executive and professional management seminars on topics such as strategy and innovation, entrepreneurship, global competencies, and e-commerce. The African Virtual University also provides access to an on-line digital library with over 1,000 full-text journals, and a Web site (www.avu.org) that allows access to e-mail for over 10,000 free accounts.

Building on the success of its pilot phase, the African Virtual University has become an independent nonprofit organization with headquarters in Nairobi and a supporting office in Washington, D.C. The university plans two main product lines: the academic channel, which will offer undergraduate students degrees in computer science and electrical and computer engineering as of October 2001 and the business and technology channel, which will deliver short courses in management, information technology, and foreign languages as of October 2000, as well as an executive Masters in Business Administration soon thereafter.

In the next three years the African Virtual University plans to expand to more countries in Africa and reach undergraduate students, faculty, and professionals through learning centers in public and private universities, private franchises, and on-site professional learning centers housed in corporations and NGOs.

strategies for innovation and reform will need to be tested in experimental settings but designed for low-cost replication. Countries cannot afford multiple high-cost experiments that end up as permanent pilots (Verspoor 1989).

Tough Choices to Ensure Financial Sustainability

African countries will have to ensure that programs for accelerated education development are financially sustainable. External assistance can narrow the financing gap that almost inevitably develops just after the adoption of significant policy reforms. Countries with low enrollment may need such assistance for 10–15 years. But to sustain education development over the long term, countries will need to mobilize the domestic resources (public and private) that the education system needs to operate, as well as to ensure efficient use of these resources.

Nevertheless, even when opportunities for efficiency gains and private financing are fully exploited, programs to accelerate education development will usually have considerable implications for government budgets. Thus countries must change the way education is financed and managed. A quantum leap in education development
will demand financial policies that define clear priorities for public resource allocation, increase the effectiveness of public spending, include strategies for diversifying funding sources beyond the public sector, and allocate additional resources to the sector. These tough choices will be feasible after extensive consultations with stakeholders in a democratic and participatory environment.

**Setting priorities for public spending**

Many countries, especially the poorest, can only meet the demand for education if they make clear and consistent choices about allocating public resources to purposes that no private resources can fund. The top priorities for public spending will typically be:

- Protecting equity by ensuring that poor people are not excluded from education because they cannot pay for it. Basic education typically will be provided free to the poor and adequate support will be available at higher levels for capable poor students.
- Allocating resources to deliver quality service, by protecting nonsalary spending even when resources are scarce and managing admissions beyond the basic education cycle to provide sufficient funding for all necessary inputs for quality instruction.
- Providing resources and personnel to strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions to design and implement reforms, including resources and personnel for evaluation and knowledge dissemination.
- Developing and disseminating lessons from innovations, particularly those involving new technologies that can improve quality and expand access cost-effectively.

**Spending resources effectively**

Reducing dropout and repetition rates through more effective instruction can achieve major efficiency gains. Better instruction will often require increasing annual costs per student, usually for nonsalary spending, but should result in more graduates, lower costs per graduate, and a more efficient flow of students through the system. In many countries teacher pay and deployment are sources of inefficiency. Teacher salaries may be pegged at levels that effectively preclude the enrollment of all children, or teachers may be underpaid. In several countries the student:teacher ratio is unnecessarily low; in others it is inefficiently high.

Almost all African countries allocate too few resources for instructional materials and the professional development of teachers. In several countries administrative expenditures are growing faster than any other expenditure category. Many countries spend too much public money on too few students in institutions of higher education, often providing poorly targeted support for living expenditures and inadequately funding teaching and research. Reallocating such spending toward better instruction usually will make resource use more efficient.

**Diversifying funding sources**

Operation of education systems in Africa has traditionally been funded primarily from centrally managed public resources. Many governments need to explore ways to broaden the resource base for education and training and set clear priorities for public funding. The case for public funding of basic education is strong (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991), but even at the basic education level, financial pressures have led governments to rely on parent contributions—school fees, contributions to school development funds, and textbook purchases—to defray the direct costs of instruction. Combined with other private costs associated with schooling (school uniforms, the opportunity cost of labor), education has become too expensive for many poor people. In Burkina Faso and Uganda the private out-of-pocket cost of sending one child to school amounts to as much
as 20 percent of per capita income (Mehrotra and Delamonica 1998).

Thus free basic education sometimes combined with targeted support—in the form of free books and scholarships—will often be needed to ensure that the poorest children, especially girls, are enrolled in basic education. At higher levels, usually beyond lower secondary education, selective cost sharing is often a policy option, with a strong equity justification. Students at these levels are typically better off. Need-based scholarships and student loan programs can assure the equitable access of poor students, and universities can often generate resources by selling services (see box 3.12).

Another important element of public education spending is regulation that maximizes opportunities for service delivery by private for-profit and nonprofit providers. Many such providers exist, but their quality is extremely variable. Better regulation and incentives could enhance their contribution to education development. Ensuring equitable access to quality primary education for all is a public responsibility, but government does not always have to be responsible for financing as well as delivering the complete gamut of education services. Where public authorities, private providers, and communities work in partnership, a wide range of alternatives such as concessions to NGOs and block grants to communities operating their own schools may be feasible.

Private operators are increasingly important partners in education service delivery in Africa, as democratic change and free market policies across the region create a new space for civil society organizations and commercial providers. Private institutions run by for-profit operators provide vocational and technical training, especially in business skills, computer skills, and languages. Large employers usually train their workers in-house. Many NGOs operate basic skill training for

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**Box 3.14**

**Government Sponsorship of Students at Private Institutions: A Case of Demand-Side Financing**

Student sponsorship in private institutions is a good example of the public and private sectors working together to help achieve important educational and social objectives. The number of places in public institutions in Côte d'Ivoire is insufficient to meet student demand. To help bridge some of the gap, the government has begun sponsoring public students to attend private institutions.

Private institutions play an important role in the Côte d'Ivoire education system, where they represent 12 percent of primary schools, 36 percent of secondary schools, and 67 percent of technical training colleges. Under the sponsorship program, the government pays private schools for each public student placed. The government sponsors students in lower and upper secondary school and also in technical and professional training. Students can be sponsored to attend both religious and secular private schools. Student placement depends partly on the educational performance of the schools. Only "chartered" institutions are eligible to take on sponsored students.

The payment varies with the student's education level: 126,200 CFAF ($200) per year for lower secondary students and 147,023 CFAF ($233) per year for upper secondary students. Until recently students were eligible for partial subsidies (50 percent), but these are being phased out. In 1997 the government paid about $10.3 million to sponsor over 162,000 students in private primary and secondary schools. In 1995–96, 40 percent of students in private institutions were state sponsored.
youth and adults. The number of private secondary schools is increasing rapidly in many countries, and about 40 private universities have been established in the 1990s in Africa. Several countries give students attending private institutions public financial support through scholarships or vouchers. This kind of demand-side financing (box 3.14), especially when targeted to eligible students from poor families, can increase the equity and efficiency of public expenditures for education.

Governments may also want to reconsider their involvement in publishing textbooks, building classrooms, and providing catering services to secondary schools and universities, all of which the private sector usually does more effectively. Several African countries have started to move in this direction, with promising results. Examples include textbook provision in Kenya (box 3.15), classroom construction in West Africa, and privatization of food and housing services in institutions of higher education in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal.

Providing additional public funding

Macroeconomic strategies must prioritize improving and expanding education. To achieve rapid progress in education development, many countries will have to increase public education expenditures significantly, even after redirecting public resources to high-priority areas. One estimate of such expenditures is an increase each year over the next decade by 5–6 percent in real terms (Mehrotra 1997). Another is an annual additional expenditure of $3.6 billion to put Sub-Saharan Africa on track toward universal primary education by 2015 (Oxfam 1999). These calculations illustrate the magnitude of the

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<td><strong>Privatization and Decentralization of Textbook Provision in Kenya</strong></td>
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In recent years a growing number of African countries have shifted the responsibility for textbook provision from government agencies to private publishers. In most cases this shift has involved a move from monopoly to competitive textbook provision. As part of this process, governments have had to develop systems that give schools the purchasing power and responsibility for selecting textbooks.

Kenya undertook a pilot project in textbook provision during 1996–98, covering 533 primary schools in the districts of Machakos and Laikipia. The schools were divided into three groups, each group given a per capita budget for textbook purchase and selection based on a list compiled by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The first group received cash deposited in a school bank account. The second group received a local purchase order. The third group schools received an order form on which they could order books up to the limit of their allocated textbook budget. School orders were then consolidated at the district level, and supply contracts were awarded based on local competitive bidding.

A detailed evaluation of the three methods of selection and procurement, as well as the performance of publishers and local retail booksellers, showed that all three approaches produced good results, although district procurement created distribution problems, and the local purchase orders created administrative problems. Publishers and booksellers performed well, and schools noted that decentralized supply and school-based decisionmaking led to lower prices, efficient and fast delivery by book sellers, and rapid correction of order inaccuracies, benefits that were lacking during the period of state publishing and supply. The pilot project has since become part of Kenya’s national textbook provision policy.
Bold reforms are needed, as well as a stronger base of knowledge and capacity for effective action. Educational, institutional, and financial reforms must reinforce each other. Many countries in the region have started the reform process and are ready to move ahead, but they have difficult choices to make and country-specific lessons to learn.

Regional cooperation and international partnerships can accelerate education development in at least three areas. First, regional and subregional forums can help countries learn from each other and strengthen the African knowledge base in education. Although countries exchange some information about their education development experience, more systematic and rigorous evaluation would add value to these exchanges. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa and its working groups are increasingly effective for such exchanges. Moreover, programs sponsored by UNESCO and CONFEMEN have created a framework for regional cooperation. As these programs expand, they can contribute to policy and planning.

Second, a region with many small, low-income countries has considerable potential to take advantage of economies of scale through multinational cooperation in activities such as book production, distance education, and research, analysis, and evaluation. A strong African publishing industry is an imperative that will require removing trade barriers between countries and allowing publishers to compete freely in the region. Distance education programs can improve quality and access, but will have to spread high upfront costs over many users to be financially viable.

Third, a few world-class centers for graduate education and basic and applied research could contribute significantly to regional education development. Although Africa has a tradition of cooperation in higher education, such arrangements place disproportionate burdens on the host countries when partner countries fail to make their contributions. A regional network of institutions that can sustain regional cooperation programs will require institu-
tions that can generate their own resources from student fees, consultancy, and research and offer internationally competitive remuneration to attract African scholars in the diaspora.

Thus a quantum leap in education development will require a radical shift in the priorities, scale, speed, and implementation of education reform, adjustment, and investment, as well as in education finance and management. These changes are unlikely to succeed unless government-led partnerships replace traditional, narrowly focused, externally driven aid programs. Countries must invest in the entire sector, including early childhood development, basic education, secondary education, skills training, higher education, and adult education.

Because each level is important, the question is not whether to provide these services, but how fast and through what financing and management mechanisms. Investments must be grounded in a solid understanding of what works and what does not. To this end, countries will need stronger analytical and evaluation capacity. This broad, sectoral approach to education development must be linked to sound macroeconomic policies and embedded in a stable public expenditure program. At the same time, countries can take advantage of the knowledge, experience, and resources of international partners. The challenge will be to manage donor contributions to maximum national advantage. Each donor—including the Bank—will have to give up some pride and prejudice to create a framework for effective cooperation.

After a long period of disappointing progress in many African countries, the prospects for education development have improved. Many countries are testing new ways of delivering, financing, and managing education services. New technologies could accelerate this process dramatically. Moreover, the success of some countries in improving learning and equitable access is helping others design national programs of innovation and reform. Governments and donors will need to renew their commitment to translate these prospects for change into genuinely improved learning opportunities. The central challenge is to develop national capacity in planning and implementation to give the millions of Africans currently excluded from education the chance to learn.

It is unacceptable, at the beginning of the 21st century, that 40 million African children cannot exercise their right to education. It is equally unacceptable that a continent of more than 600 million people is not participating in the global knowledge economy and that more than 40 percent of its population lives on less than a $1 a day (World Bank 2000b). Accelerating education development must be a key element in efforts to eliminate poverty and provide Africa’s children with brighter futures.

Since 1994 progress in education development has resumed in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The disappointments of the 1980s; the examples of countries that have been able to move forward; the increasing recognition of the importance of education for poverty elimination, competitiveness, and economic growth; the prospect of accelerated debt relief—all have created an environment more favorable to education development than at any time in the past 10 years. Many countries in the region are ready to move forward with much-needed policy reforms and innovations. But few countries will be able to tackle this challenge alone.

The World Bank is ready to support actively the acceleration of education development in Africa. To do this effectively, the Africa Region of the World Bank will expand its support for education development and move aggressively to improve the scope and effectiveness of its lending and non-lending services. It will ensure that a strategic focus on poverty elimination, technical quality, and support for government-led partnerships become the defining features of the Bank’s work in the sector.

The World Bank is one of many sources of external assistance to education in Africa, providing 20–25 percent of external aid (Ridker 1994, ADEA 1998). In addition to providing financial support, the Bank has made important contributions to the discussion of policy issues and aid priorities through donor forums, country-specific analytical and project development work, and discussions with national economic and financial authorities. The Bank’s 1988 regional policy paper “Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion” (World Bank 1988) initiated a dialogue between aid agencies and African ministers of education that eventually led to the establishment of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa. A sense of partnership between national policymakers and the international education aid community is now well-established.

In many countries the challenges of education development have become even more urgent and more crucial to growth and poverty elimination than they were in 1988. Governments, civil society, and the education aid community—including the Bank—are searching for ways to work together to break the stagnation of the past two decades. But questions have been raised—inside and outside the Bank—about the scope and effectiveness of Bank assistance to education in Africa. For example, Oxfam (1999) characterizes the Bank’s record in support of basic education in Africa as “underperformance.”

Many of these questions are valid and have encouraged the Africa Region to reflect on its priorities and approaches to lending for education. World Bank lending for education in Africa has stagnated at less than $200 million a year since 1995. Strategies to ensure equitable access of the poor to education services have often been underdesigned. Secondary, vocational, and technical education may have received too little attention. The educational potential of old and new technologies has rarely been exploited. The Bank’s policy support often rests on narrow analytical foundations. Linkages to macroeconomic reform have often been weak. The sustainability and institutional impact of Bank investments cause concern, although the implementation performance of the current portfolio has improved significantly since 1998.
This chapter discusses how the Bank proposes to be a more effective partner for education development in Africa. In summary, the Bank plans to be an active participant in country-led partnerships for education development, inspiring innovation and change with a focus on fostering learning opportunities for the poor in systems that measure performance by learning achievement and financial sustainability. To this end, the Bank will draw on its comparative advantage—its macroeconomic and public expenditure perspective, its sectorwide view of policy reforms, and its abilities to identify and develop linkages with other sectors, and to tap into a wide range of international knowledge and experience.

Opportunities—and Challenges—
for Expanded Lending Services

Bank support for education in Africa began in 1963 and has totaled $4.8 billion for all levels of the formal system as well as for adult literacy, early childhood education, and skill development. Over the past 10 years, as poverty elimination became the Bank’s explicit central mission, education has gained prominence in the lending program for Africa. The Bank made more loans for education in the 1990s than in the previous 27 years—$2.9 billion, or 9 percent of lending to the region compared with a Bankwide average of 8 percent.

The current education portfolio contains 35 projects involving a commitment of $1.13 billion. These projects are implemented in 27 countries containing about 70 percent of Africa’s population. In about half of the 21 countries without education projects, protracted conflict and economic chaos have precluded Bank investment. Most of the remaining countries are not eligible for International Development Association funds and, with one or two exceptions, have elected not to borrow for education on International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) terms.

Bank commitments for education lending averaged less than $150 million a year in the late 1980s, increased to about $350 million a year in the early 1990s, and declined to less than $200 million a year during 1995–99 (figure 4.1). Disbursements have averaged about $200 million a

Figure 4.1  New Commitments for Bank Lending to African Education

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year since 1995. Education lending has declined since the mid-1990s for several reasons, including the turmoil in some large countries, the reluctance of others to reform education policy, and the weak absorptive capacity of key institutions throughout the region. Moreover, the 1995 reorganization of the Bank's Africa Region and the time required to "retool" the sector in the face of intensifying challenges and evolving priorities made quick responses to new requests for funding support difficult.

In addition, the Bank might have focused its limited staff resources too narrowly on basic education at the expense of other subsectors and portfolio diversity. The difficulty of designing and sustaining implementation of investment programs supporting reforms in vocational, secondary, and higher education reinforced this trend. As a result, the composition of education lending shifted in the 1990s (figure 4.2). In 1985–89 less than 25 percent of Bank lending was for primary education in Africa, while more than 50 percent was for vocational, secondary, and higher education. Since then the emphasis on primary education has increased markedly. In 1995–99, 48 percent of Bank lending for education in Africa supported pre-primary and primary education, and less than 30 percent supported vocational, secondary, and higher education. The Bank's commitment to provide balanced support to all parts of the system in line with national priorities makes a prima facie case for developing a more balanced portfolio of education projects. This will involve increasing support for post-primary education while maintaining strong support for basic education development.

New lending instruments are changing the way the Bank supports education development in Africa. Of the 16 projects presented to the Board in fiscal 1999 and 2000, 4—for The Gambia, Lesotho, Senegal, and Zambia—were adaptable program loans designed to support long-term, sector-wide education development through a series of investments. In all four the first loan tranche focused on primary education. Investments in other parts of the system are expected to be funded by future tranches activated by predetermined policy triggers. Seven of the fiscal 1999/2000 projects were learning and innovation loans designed to test new approaches to technical and policy problems in primary teacher training in Guinea, adult literacy in the Ivory Coast, national language instruction in Mali, and distance education in four countries (see box 3.4).

### Figure 4.2 Subsector Distribution of Lending in the Africa Region Education Sector

#### FY 85–89:
- Pre-primary 0%
- Primary 29%
- General secondary 9%
- Vocational 9%
- Higher 17%
- Teacher training 12%

#### FY 95–99:
- Pre-primary 2%
- Primary 46%
- General secondary 17%
- Higher 7%
- Teacher training 5%
- Vocational 4%

Source: World Bank data.
Opportunities exist to expand support for education development. The reemergence of Nigeria as an active borrower could have an important impact on lending commitments. And a number of IBRD countries in the region are considering borrowing for education. Several countries are ready to make the tough decisions and implement the policy reforms needed to accelerate education development. In war-torn countries such as Burundi and Rwanda where political agreements result in increased stability and peace the Bank will support post-conflict reconstruction.

Lending for education development through traditional direct investments in the sector is currently programmed to increase to an average of around $300–350 million a year over the period 2000–03. In addition substantial support for education is programmed through budget support programs as part of the HIPC debt initiative, and through Public Expenditure Credits (PERC) or Poverty Reduction Support Credits (PRSC). Expanded debt relief under the HIPC initiative presents opportunities to free funds to strengthen the national resource base to sustain accelerated education development. Uganda, an early beneficiary of debt stock reduction under the HIPC initiative, is a promising example: budget savings from debt relief have been channeled into the national poverty action fund and have helped finance the drive for quality basic education for all children. Approximately 20 countries in the region should become eligible for HIPC relief in the next five years. In each case debt relief will be able to contribute to expanded education opportunities (table 4.1). For example, in Mali education expenditures are expected to increase from 24 percent to 27 percent of a larger budget, while in Niger an increase in education expenditure from 3.6 percent to 4.5 percent is being considered. Policy reform and increased budget allocation for education typically are priorities in PERCs and PRSCs, which the Bank is considering in several Africa countries such as Benin, Chad, and Uganda.

The Bank strategy thus will be to help countries build the human capital foundation for accelerated growth and poverty alleviation through a combination of direct investments and budget support. The total of this support would represent a significant increase—possibly a tripling of the levels of education financing of the late 1990s. This will allow the Bank to contribute to accelerating African education development in line with its international commitments and institutional emphasis on poverty elimination.

Reaching these levels of support for education development will require changes in the way the Bank conducts its business. It will require much closer linkages between macroeconomic and sectoral policy dialogue and financial support as well as changes in internal practices and lending policies and priorities. It will also require administrative budget and staffing levels that will allow the Bank to support these programs financially and professionally. But ultimately the feasibility of a major increase in Bank support for education development in Africa will also depend on the willingness of countries to place education high on their policy agendas, initiate national programs

| Table 4.1 Debt Relief Relative to Spending on Education (millions of dollars) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Country                        | Average Annual Debt Relief 2000–09 | 1998 Education Budget |
| Mauritania                     | 50               | 34               |
| Mozambique                     | 117              | 72               |
| Tanzania                       | 135              | 150              |
| Uganda                         | 65               | 220              |
of innovation and reform, strengthen national capacity for policy formulation and implementation, and resolve conflicts peacefully.

Greater Emphasis on Nonlending Services

To be an effective lender for education development, the Bank must be an effective source of knowledge, ideas, and policy advice. Bank staff have provided such nonlending services through their work on lending operations and through seminars and workshops, often in collaboration with the World Bank Institute. Effective nonlending services are an important part of the Bank's assistance package because they can help countries build a solid analytical foundation for expanded lending and strengthen the national knowledge base for policy reform and the capacity for effective implementation.

Good analytical work can contribute significantly to project outcomes. A recent analysis of Bank projects showed that analytical work has a high pay-off: even after controlling for country, sector, and economic conditions and staff preparation and supervision costs, benefits were nine times staff costs (Deininger, Squire, and Basu 1998). The same study found that the Bank underinvested in these activities and recommended shifting resources from project preparation to analytical work. Although this approach would likely lead to fewer projects and lower commitments, projects would be better designed, better implemented, and more successful.

Formal analyses typically have been the foundation of the education dialogue between the Bank and its clients. Before 1990 most Bank-sponsored sector analysis was done by Bank staff (or by UNESCO staff under a cooperative agreement with the Bank), with varying but usually limited involvement of national staff, and funded from the Bank’s budget for economic and sector work. The policy impact of these reports was usually limited. A review of education sector analysis in Africa (UNESCO 1996) found that many studies by international funding and technical assistance agencies, including the Bank, have had little national ownership, have rarely been used by policymakers, and have focused on issues that were high on the agencies’ policy agendas but of limited relevance to pressing national policy. Taken together, these studies show considerable duplication without much national capacity building.

There have been exceptions to this approach, however. In 1972 an Ethiopian team undertook a national education sector study. In 1980 a Sierra Leonian team’s review of education issues formed the basis for a national basic education development program supported by the Bank, and in the mid-1980s the Bank and UNESCO collaborated to support country-led sector work in several French-speaking countries. Starting in the late 1980s, the Bank made a more conscious effort to develop the capacity of national staff for analytical work in the context of sector studies and project preparation. In many instances, however, international consultants have continued to play a large role.

Problems with the traditional approach to economic and sector work in the education sector are widely recognized. The Bank is now trying to ensure a leadership role for national analysts and researchers in sector analyses (box 4.1). In some cases workshops with national education specialists have been the basis of study design, review of findings, and development of an action plan.

In recent years budget allocations for economic and sector work on African education have declined drastically. Bank-funded sector work is, however, only a small part of the Bank’s analytical work. National staff carry out many studies with funding from the Policy and Human Resources Development fund established by the Japanese government for project preparation, or from funds earmarked for that purpose in existing projects.
Box 4.1

A Collaborative Effort to Prepare a Strategy Paper in Madagascar

In late 1992 the Government of Madagascar and the World Bank agreed to develop an operational strategy for reforming primary and secondary education. A working group of 12 professionals from the Ministry of Education’s Research and Planning Unit was established in early 1993 to study qualitative improvements at both levels.

Following a 10-day workshop in July 1993, the working group developed a research framework to test ways to improve the quality and efficiency of primary and secondary education. Data and observations were collected during two-day visits to 36 public schools in all six regions of Madagascar. The data were then analyzed, and the results were discussed and validated in 1994 before draft versions of the reports were prepared and circulated in early 1995.

The process had three important features. First, the Bank was able to leverage high-quality domestic expertise and quality research with limited but strategic inputs. Bank resources included four short visits to Madagascar (about eight staff-weeks). Second, the research contributed to capacity building in the Ministry of Education and institutional strengthening in its Research and Planning Unit. Expertise developed during this research has been used in similar research since then, as well as in several other African countries, including Comoros, Mali, and Senegal. Third, the results and recommendations of the study shaped a pilot school-based development program implemented between 1994 and 1998. That program formed the basis for a revised national strategy for education improvement adopted by the government of Madagascar in December 1997.

These studies are, however, rarely reviewed by peers or by Bank staff other than task managers. As a result their quality is extremely variable and their coverage uneven. Clearly the Bank will need to rethink the place of sector work in its assistance package, as well as funding arrangements and review procedures, if it wants to play an effective catalytic role for reform and innovation in Africa. In fact, new processes have been established in the Africa Region to improve the management and quality review processes of economic and sector work.

Reviews of recent project appraisal documents suggest that financial, institutional, and technical issues have not been analyzed routinely or in sufficient depth. Moreover, most project appraisal documents point out continued weaknesses in national capacity for education data collection, policy analysis and evaluation, and program implementation. Addressing these weaknesses will require nationally implemented sector analyses as well as formal and informal Bank reports that include arrangements for peer review to help task managers contribute state-of-the-art knowledge and experience to policy discussions. A small, recently established regional team will support task managers with the economic and financial analysis required to underpin the education component of HIPC-supported reform programs. This support already has noticeably improved the depth of economic analysis.

Reorienting policy discussions

In recent years the Africa Region has tried to support subregional and national discussions of policy obstacles to basic education development. Seminars and training workshops for borrower staff and Bank task managers have been organized.
under the United Nations Special Initiative for Africa (UNSIA), which targets the 16 African countries with the lowest enrollments. UNESCO and the World Bank are co-leaders of the education component of UNSIA, which is implemented in collaboration with UNESCO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), with support from the Norwegian Education Trust Fund. This component will focus on the 16 countries with less than 60 percent of their children in primary school.

The Bank’s Africa Region will continue to support these discussions and to encourage regional and global developing country partnerships. Important regional experience and expertise should inform national strategies and foster mechanisms for regional and subregional cooperation. Several regional partnerships have been influential, such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) on policy discussions on female education, and the Educational Research Network in Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) on the exchange of information on education development issues. In addition, Latin America, South Asia, and other regions can teach important lessons on such key issues as early childhood development, adult education, multigrade teaching, and school management. Several study visits have been organized in collaboration with the World Bank Institute to give African planners and policymakers an opportunity to review innovations such as Colombia’s escuela nueva and the Republic of Korea’s education development strategy. The Africa Region intends to continue such efforts and intensify them as appropriate.

The Bank has also actively supported the ADEA working groups that promote capacity building and analysis. All of these activities can add to the local knowledge base for innovation and reform and create an environment for developing national solutions—informed by regional and international experience—to national problems. But unless national staff internalize the findings of the analytical work and exchanges of experiences and translate them into action, they are unlikely to realize the potential benefits. The challenge is to ensure that these activities build local capacity and generate analytical work relevant to national policy reform and used by policymakers.

The Imperative of Better Portfolio Performance

Implementation ratings of Bank education projects in Africa have traditionally been lower than those in other regions. While there have been few meaningful assessments of project impact, there is a perception—and mounting evidence—that Bank lending has not been as effective as it could have been. Portfolio ratings improved significantly in fiscal 2000 when all problem projects were targeted for intensive supervision, several were restructured, and others were closed. Only 3 of the 41 current education projects are rated as unsatisfactory or highly unsatisfactory in terms of implementation progress toward development objectives.

Yet nearly a third of Africa’s education projects—twice the Bankwide average for education—are considered at risk by the Bank’s Quality Assurance Group, mainly because unfavorable country conditions may affect implementation. In addition, performance ratings by the Bank’s Operations Evaluation Department for African education projects completed during 1993–2000 show that 61 percent achieved satisfactory outcomes (the Bankwide average for education is 69 percent), and 22 percent are likely to be sustained (compared with the Bankwide average of 49 percent). But only 10 percent show substantial institutional development impact (compared with the Bankwide 34 percent).

These results in part reflect exogenous factors beyond the Bank’s control, especially widespread armed conflict in the region. Yet the Bank could
do much to improve project performance. A 1998 Bankwide review of quality at entry found that including systematic institutional analysis and social assessments in the preparation work could improve the initial design of projects in Africa significantly. These general findings are undoubtedly fully applicable to the education portfolio.

In recent years the Africa Region has taken steps toward more effective and extensive support for education development in Africa. Lending has become more country focused, portfolio ratings have improved, and targeted supervision has improved implementation performance. More staff are being recruited, and experience with nearly 10 years of support for sector investment and adjustment programs is being used to guide the design of sectorwide assistance strategies. Several countries are exploring the possibility of implementing such strategies within a comprehensive development framework. Collaboration with other donors is stronger, and increasingly borrowers are taking responsibility for sector analysis and project development, implementation, and supervision.

But the Bank could do more to improve the effectiveness of its assistance. First, it should contribute to education development in line with its comparative advantage—its macroeconomic and public expenditure perspective, its sectorwide view of policy reforms, and its abilities to identify and develop linkages with other sectors, and to tap into a wide range of international knowledge and experience. Second, it should design its operations, consistent with its overall objectives in the sector (World Bank 1999a), to emphasize:
- Equitable access of excluded groups—the poor, rural populations, girls—to real learning opportunities.
- Quality service, as measured by learning achievements.
- Sustainable financing.

The Bank must ensure that it responds effectively to emerging opportunities and matches countries’ commitment to accelerated education development with a better performing and more diversified portfolio. If the Bank is to continue to play its role as a key source of sector policy advice, improve the performance of its education portfolio, and expand support for education development, the Africa Region will need to change the way it does business. Specific actions are proposed on the development and implementation of lending operations in five areas: sharpening the strategic focus of lending, improving the lending development process, promoting partnerships, matching lending strategies to country conditions, and applying state-of-the-art knowledge. In addition, and perhaps most important, the region will have to enhance staff technical skills and knowledge for a better and larger program of support to education development in Africa.

**Sharpening the strategic focus of lending**

An expanded lending program should help countries implement policy reforms that will help them move toward the strategic objectives discussed in chapter 3:
- Improving learning, not just expanding access and meeting enrollment targets.
- Providing equitable access to education opportunities, especially for the poor and for girls.
- Building capacity and strengthening institutions.
- Achieving long-term financial sustainability so that successful reforms can be taken to scale.

With more than 40 potential borrowers in Africa, regional lending priorities will be neither simple nor uniform. Thus the Bank should be ready to respond to a wide range of education development situations, deploying different strategies for different countries. Nevertheless, formal primary education will remain a top priority for the Bank’s investments in African education. Education development cannot be balanced without a quality system of basic education accessible to all children of primary school age.

Of particular concern are the 16 UNSIA countries without the capacity to enroll more than 60 percent...
The FRESH Start Partnership: Focusing Resources on Effective School Health

Good health and nutrition are essential for learning. Effective school health programs will contribute to reduced absenteeism and drop-out, and the enrollment and retention of more of the poorest and most disadvantaged children in school. These children—many of whom are girls—are often the least healthy and most malnourished, and have the most to gain educationally from improved health.

An interagency initiative of UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, and the World Bank has identified a core group of activities, each already recommended by the participating agencies, that captures the best practices from program experiences.

- **Effective curriculum and school policies on health issues** such as tobacco, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS.
- **Safe water and sanitation** in all schools.
- **Skills based health education** targets HIV/AIDS, good nutrition, and hygiene.
- **School based health and nutrition services** that deliver safe, simple, and familiar interventions, such as deworming and good nutrition.

Bank-funded projects exist today in Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Côte d’Ivoire while a number of other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are developing school health components to be folded into existing projects. The program provides an unprecedented opportunity for new partnership across sectors and traditional boundaries, such as the private sector support from SmithKline Beecham. Overall, the interagency action is perceived as focusing resources on effective school health, and giving a FRESH Start to improving the quality and equity of education.

of the age group in primary school. Several of these countries are emerging from civil strife and need to rebuild systems that have all but collapsed. They often face acute resource constraints and require major financial assistance in the immediate post-conflict period. But others, including many francophone West African countries, require radical reforms in delivery modes, resource allocation priorities, and management systems to lay the foundation for education systems that contribute to sustained economic and social development. Several are preparing ambitious sector development programs—with primary education development as the top priority.

In many other countries—including those that already have the capacity to enroll all their children—continued support for primary education will be essential to ensure that this capacity is used efficiently and effectively to allow students to complete the basic education cycle and graduate with the knowledge and skills specified in the curriculum. Reducing repetition is crucial to achieving this goal, since high repetition rates result not only in occupied school places that could otherwise be taken by other children but also in high dropout rates. So far Bank lending has typically emphasized providing inputs into the education process, which is clearly insufficient. Henceforth the Bank will give priority attention to the process and outcomes of learning.

Achieving quality basic education for all will require more than reforms of and investments in the formal system. It will also require broad support for basic education through investments in early childhood education programs, school health (box 4.2), and adult literacy. In all three areas the Bank and its borrowers will need to learn lessons from international experience as well as from the few Bank-supported programs currently implement-
ed, while diversifying program designs and experimenting with new approaches through learning and innovation loans.

Centrally managed systems have typically had great difficulty in responding to different local needs and effectively managing rapid system expansion. The effectiveness of Bank support for accelerated development of basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa will depend largely on how well lending operations can be designed to help governments mobilize communities for education development. This will involve support for strengthening community organizations such as parent-teacher associations and village education committees, creating mechanisms to transfer resources and responsibility to these organizations, and developing working relations with local government authorities who will be increasingly involved in delivering education and training services.

Thus Bank support for basic education will increasingly cover the full range of basic education services while giving priority support to programs that:

- Ensure equal opportunities for excluded children—poor, rural, and female—to access quality basic education.
- Adapt service models—multigrade schools, flexible staffing arrangements, local language instruction, choice of textbooks and instructional materials—to local conditions.
- Deconcentrate management responsibility and empower community organizations to support education.

There is increasingly strong demand throughout the region to expand access to upper primary (sometimes called lower secondary) programs—typically grades 6–9. Many countries consider this level to be part of the basic education cycle. Expansion at this level will be particularly rapid where the primary gross enrollment ratio approaches 100 percent. Bank support at this level will stress the need to develop more cost-effective delivery modes, improve teaching and learning, and ensure equitable access for girls and rural residents. In countries with low gross enrollment ratios or significant underfinancing and quality problems at the primary level, Bank support will be set in the context of a sectoral policy and financial framework that ensures sustained progress toward universal access to and completion of primary education.

While Bank support for education development in the past two decades has not excluded a priori any subsector, the Africa Region’s lending and nonlending work needs to give higher priority to education beyond the basic cycle. Recognizing the importance of opportunities for continued learning and skill acquisition for youth, the Bank plans to strengthen its capacity to support the development of secondary education, particularly the teaching of math, science, and technology. The Bank will also be ready to support skill development systems that respond to labor market demand. An emerging lending area is continuing education, including adult basic education. Bank support will be directed especially to programs that target poor people. But much is still to be learned about cost-effective delivery modes—including the role of the private sector and the potential of new technologies.

In higher education, considerable policy work has been done by the Bank and other organizations, including ADEA’s Higher Education Working Group. In most countries the options for policy reform and institutional strengthening are reasonably clear. The challenge has been to make the tough decisions required to revitalize key higher education institutions and develop the necessary stakeholder (especially student and faculty) support. As a result, reform implementation has been slow, and the Bank’s portfolio and lending for higher education in Africa remain relatively small. The Bank will continue to explore opportunities to support higher education development, including graduate programs and scientific research. Such support is expected to focus on reforms to
improve teaching and research, in part through
more effective use of new education technologies.
These reforms will need to be implemented in the
context of a long-term, financially sustainable
framework for institutional strengthening and
selective expansion.

Education technology, when used judiciously,
can broaden access to and improve the quality of
education services (see box 3.5). The record of
education technology projects has been disap-
pointing however, and Bank lending for this pur-
pose has been limited. Yet much has been
learned about the potential of education tech-
nology and the pitfalls of its implementation.
New interactive computer and Internet technolo-
gies are creating promising but still untested
opportunities. The Bank will ensure its readiness
to assist countries with the introduction of edu-
cation technology and distance learning systems
(box 4.3).

Box 4.3

Increasing Support for Education Technology

With a few exceptions, education technology has not
been a prominent element in Bank lending for educa-
tion in Sub-Saharan Africa. Because old technologies
that use surface mail, radio, television, audio and
video cassettes, and the new computer and Internet-
based technologies can help accelerate education
development, the Bank must adopt a new strategy to:

• Strengthen the knowledge base by commissioning a
document on the empirical basis for strategic action.
• Establish close working relations with specialist
organizations such as the Commonwealth of Learning
and the African Network for Distance Learning (RESAFAD).
• Build in-house capacity by recruiting two educa-
tion specialists to support task team leaders in the
design of distance education and education technolo-
gy components in new lending operations.

• Ensure that the experience of the African Virtual
University, WorldLinks, and the Global Distance
Learning Network is available to countries and task
team leaders and is adequately considered in the
design of new lending operations.
• Consider the implications of introducing educa-
tion technologies in the design of education financing
and capacity-building strategies.
• Move aggressively to support the large-scale
introduction of proven cost-effective technologies as
part of education lending.
• Significantly increase support through project
components or learning and innovation loans for
promising experiments and innovations that require
further testing and piloting—especially those using
new communication and computer technology.

Improving lending development

Recent changes in the Bank's operational and sector
work are designed to foster client ownership, put
borrowers in the driver's seat, encourage national
(rather than international) solutions, and emphasize
the transfer and adaptation of knowledge. These
new approaches will need further development.
Ideally, national specialists would carry out all oper-
alional tasks except appraisal, with Bank staff serv-
ning as a sounding board for ideas and contributing
international expertise. This is an important shift
from the Bank's traditional way of doing business—
staff and international consultants taking primary
responsibility for sector analysis, project prepara-
tion, and supervision, with varying but often limit-
ed collaboration with national staff (see chapter 3).

In some countries the Bank has made consider-
able progress in this direction, but it needs to inten-
sify its efforts to ensure that the ideal becomes the
norm. The Africa Region will need to think through the implications for managing the project cycle and adapt its operational procedures and staff performance expectations to the fact that control over project development and processing will rest largely with the borrower. The Bank will need to communicate expectations for quality at entry standards clearly to staff and agree on them with clients. These changes will require:

- Building capacity for country-led education development.
- Greater use of sectorwide approaches.
- Better quality at entry.
- More flexibility in applying Bank policies and procedures.
- Enhanced field presence.

**Building capacity for country-led education development.** Bank lending and project preparation assistance will be structured to help develop national capacity to analyze sectors, prepare investment programs, and supervise their implementation. Processes and timetables will need to be designed so that national staff can carry out quality work. The Bank has an array of instruments—learning and innovation loans, adaptable program loans, and institutional development grants, in addition to traditional investment loans—to support intensive capacity building as countries embark on large-scale investment programs.

**Greater use of sectorwide approaches.** Bank assistance increasingly will be designed in the context of a sectorwide approach to education development. Sectorwide approaches have been used to meet several objectives. Most important, they have been used to develop a broad policy framework within which donors and government work in partnership to accelerate progress toward key policy objectives, with the aim of fostering country ownership and sustainable national solutions. The sectorwide approach also provides a foundation for investment programs that seek to accelerate progress toward key policy objectives.

Although experience with sector investment programs in education is limited (box 4.4), such programs are clearly promising for coherent policy reform and more effective external aid. However, sectorwide programs cannot be expected to solve all the problems that have affected education development projects, nor are they suitable for all countries.

Moreover, sectorwide approaches should not divert attention from the continuing importance of experimentation and pilots in the development of policy frameworks.

The sectorwide approach usually increases demands on national planning and implementation capacity. Given these demands, the Bank is ready to design flexible financial assistance packages to help governments move forward expeditiously with reform programs, even when all parts of financing plans have not been formally agreed on. Moreover, the need to reach consensus on a range of policy issues with a large number of stakeholders usually means more time and resources for program development and preparation.

Given the time frames involved, the success of sectorwide programs will depend on deepening and strengthening the Bank’s long-term partnerships with governments and other donors. Countries and donors will need to review carefully the lessons from first-generation sector investment programs and be flexible in the design and implementation of new programs. Since many African countries do not have sufficiently strong institutions to simultaneously design and implement all elements of often technically complex and politically sensitive sector investment programs, investments will often have to be sequenced by subsector. But even these cases will demand financial analysis covering the whole sector. Others will need alternative approaches such as longer term subsectoral investment programs.

In addition, financial assistance strategies will need to recognize that sectorwide reform and development programs take a long time (often 10 years or more) to implement and institutionalize. Adaptable program loans provide a framework for supporting long-term sector investment programs.
Box 4.4

Sectorwide Approaches

A recent study (Johanson 2000) reviews the Bank's still-limited experience with sectorwide approaches in the Africa Region to identify strengths, weaknesses, and good practice.

Strengths of sector approaches were noted in several areas. All cases reviewed developed comprehensive plans and strategies, and in some countries capacity was developed for decentralized planning. Stronger links were forged between policies, allocation of funds, and performance. Stakeholder consultations were strengthened and frameworks for donor coordination established. Donors adopted common procedures, especially for joint missions, monitoring, and progress reporting, thus reducing the burden of aid administration for governments. Some programs have begun to move to budget support by pooling external resources and channeling them through national budgets. Resources allocated to the sectors increased.

Weaknesses included the lack of rigorous sector analysis in some cases, the lack of systematic analysis of institutional and implementation capacity in most cases, and inadequate design of monitoring indicators. Other problems were weak data collection and disappointment with the outcomes of semiannual reviews. During implementation problems are the rule rather than the exception.

Good practice recommendations include:

- Only undertake a sectorwide approach when the country is clearly committed to collaborating and has demonstrated a minimum level of implementation capacity.
- Establish a government-led collaboration from the outset based on a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all partners, mutual trust, and adequate time to review policies and discuss agreements.
- Establish a comprehensive policy framework for analytic purposes, recognizing that policy analysis will be ongoing and that an initial investment may be limited to a particular subsector.
- Develop financial parameters, whenever possible based on public expenditure reviews, to ensure reasonable intrasectoral resource allocations with a clear longer-term commitment to pooled funding.
- Build management systems and capacity based on explicit institutional and capacity analyses, including monitoring and evaluation systems as well as arrangements for financial management, common procedures for joint review and reporting, and contingency planning and risk analysis.

An increasing share of support for Africa's education investment programs is expected to come through these kinds of loans.

Better quality at entry. The initial design of lending operations, referred to in the Bank as quality at entry, is an essential element in translating sector analysis into results on the ground. Clear standards must be established, and staff must be aware that these standards must be reflected in project appraisal documents. Minimum standards will include a credible quality improvement strategy, a financial framework with monitorable parameters, an agreed plan for organizational strengthening and capacity building with monitorable benchmarks, a social assessment for every project that focuses on the needs and constraints of socially disadvantaged groups, and a project implementation plan.

To help staff achieve these goals, the Africa Region will:

- Strengthen its peer review procedures.
- Enhance technical advice to country directors and sector managers through a review by the
education sector leader or other senior staff of all economic and sector work, project concept documents, and project appraisal documents.

- Establish mechanisms for systematically providing advice and guidance to inexperienced staff.

The Bank will make a special effort to involve senior education specialists from other regions in peer reviews. For programs that address especially difficult challenges—strategies for universal primary education, the renewal of vocational training, better secondary science and math teaching—special advisory groups with staff from outside the region and outside the Bank will be created to support task teams. Voluntary Quality Assurance Group reviews will be requested as needed. Project timetables will be designed to ensure adequate time between the project concept document and the project appraisal document to follow up on the comments of the peer reviewers.

Efforts to ensure quality at entry are wasted without effective implementation. When problems are understood and solutions are known, implementation issues can and should be addressed before loan approval. But where projects support investments or strategies for which the knowledge base is weak, or where the economic and political environment is uncertain, project designs will need to be flexible. They will need to include mechanisms for adjusting project designs in light of lessons learned during implementation, through preparation of annual action plans and midterm reviews. In addition, managers should recognize that the need for peer review and support does not end once a loan has been approved. Several Bank regions have had positive experiences in establishing review and support groups for task managers overseeing at-risk and problem projects. This approach will also be tried in the Africa Region.

*Flexibility in applying Bank policies and procedures.* Operational policies and procedures will need to be applied flexibly to support accelerated education development programs. This includes policies and procedures for incremental operating costs (including teacher salaries), community construction of classrooms, procurement and accounting (when responsibility for implementation and spending is highly decentralized), budget support in the context of multidonor sector investment programs, and lending for regional programs.

World Bank lending for education development in the Africa Region has largely been limited to support for investment costs. Only in exceptional cases have loans supported incremental teacher salaries and recurrent costs. In reality, the distinction between capital and recurrent education expenditures is often an arbitrary one, while supporting recurrent costs such as teachers’ payrolls may be the most effective contribution to a country’s human capital base (Colclough and Lewin 1993). Moreover, in a rapidly expanding system such costs can be significant, and underfunding them can undermine the effectiveness of donor interventions elsewhere in the education sector.

In the context of sectorwide investment programs, in which all external resources are channeled through the government budget and thus are fungible, the reluctance to fund operating costs has no clear justification, provided there are clear agreements on a financial framework and teacher remuneration and deployment policy. Where programs include such agreements, the Africa Region will be ready to support spending on incremental teacher salaries and other recurrent expenditures in accordance with established Bank policy.

Increasingly, responsibility for implementing key elements of education development programs, often accompanied by a transfer of authority for resource allocation, is being assigned to lower-level government officials, schools, and school management committees. These groups will be expected to take responsibility for building classrooms, maintaining infrastructure, and buying furniture and instructional materials.
This shift has important implications for procurement, financial management, accounting, and auditing. The Bank's traditional approach to contractor-executed construction—supervised by national departments or ministries and awarded on the basis of national competitive bidding—is inappropriate for building the tens of thousands of two- and three-classroom blocks that will be required to provide education opportunities to rural children. Experience in South Asia shows that community-managed construction can result in the construction of a large number of small schools at low cost—provided there is adequate technical support (DPEP 1999).

Similarly, procurement procedures must recognize that local needs for goods and services will differ in kind, in quantity, and over time. Thus bulk procurement is often impractical and inconsistent with community or other forms of decentralized management of resources, making local shopping the preferred method. Procurement procedures in credit agreements need to be formulated so that community construction is allowed for the bulk of construction in rural areas and so that local shopping is recognized as the most cost-effective way to procure small amounts of building supplies and instructional materials. Accounting and auditing procedures need to be designed to allow effective financial control of expenditures by a large number of dispersed implementing agents.

Procurement and financial management arrangements in sector investment programs involving several donors often are not easily accommodated within traditional Bank guidelines. Special arrangements involving compromises by all parties, including the Bank, may need to be negotiated. More flexibility implies the need to agree at appraisal on a procedures manual for procurement, financial management, accounting, and auditing. Financial officers in district education offices, head teachers, and treasurers of school management committees must be trained in procurement and basic accounting.

A constraint on Bank lending so far has been the difficulty of supporting regional or subregional programs. Yet such programs have considerable potential in a fragmented region where subregional cooperation often can yield substantial benefits through pooling knowledge and skills, tapping into economies of scale, and reducing unit cost. The potential benefits of regional programs are especially attractive in higher education—in particular at the graduate and post-graduate levels, in curriculum development for programs with limited country-specific content, and in the use of education technology to support math, science, and technology education in secondary schools and undergraduate university programs. Efforts are under way to develop new lending instruments and procedures designed specifically to overcome the obstacles to lending for regional programs.

Enhanced field presence. Changes in the way the Bank carries out its operational work will require making adequate time and resources available to ensure:

- First-rate technical support for national teams.
- Sufficient time for clients to work through analysis and project designs to ensure that technical interventions are viable.
- Effective monitoring of implementation progress and use of resources.

Washington, D.C.-based teams that visit a country two or three times a year for two weeks of discussion driven by the need to reach agreement and closure will find it difficult to sustain the support and dialogue that such efforts entail and that are essential to building collaborative business procedures. Much of this work can only be done by local and international technical specialists based in Bank field offices. Such a need poses an important challenge in Africa, where most countries are small and operations are often affected by political and economic instability. The strategy to test will be one of posting senior education specialists in the field offices of major education borrowers and locally recruited education professionals in
the field office of every country where the Bank has or is preparing a major education program. These specialists would then also support locally recruited and less experienced staff in neighboring countries.

Promoting partnerships

The daunting demands of education development in Africa can only be met when donors and governments work together toward common goals. At the regional level, donors and governments can collaborate in several organizations—ADEA, UNESCO, UNICEF, CONFEMEN, the Organization for African Unity, and international NGOs. At the country level, however, much remains to be done to promote collaboration and partnership. In programs supported by multiple donors, governments will have to take charge of donor coordination and work with donors and national stakeholders to define the rules. Donors and governments need to share information and frankly discuss analytical findings. Wherever feasible and desirable, the Bank will be ready to collaborate closely with governments and other donors. Over time, such collaboration should develop into full partnership, based on common objectives and a readiness to share risks and rewards with partners.

In a number of instances in which the Bank has worked with partners, its role has been limited to that of “lender of last resort,” especially in the context of sector investment programs. While appropriate in purely financial terms, this role occasionally has been misinterpreted and has resulted in a disproportionate allocation of Bank funding for civil works spending. This has reduced the Bank’s ability to support the design and implementation of key policy and institutional reforms. Increasingly, the Bank will seek to catalyze innovation and reform by contributing its knowledge to the design of sector investment programs, when possible under cofinancing arrangements, and otherwise by targeting its financial resources to key program elements.

With the move toward more open, democratic societies in Africa, broader government-donor partnerships and engagement of civil society—including national NGOs, trade unions, and student organizations—in an open debate about education policies and development strategies will become more important. The Bank and its borrowers will need to enter into a systematic dialogue with these stakeholders and develop new modes of collaboration and partnership appropriate to the capacity and needs of civil society organizations. The strengthening of civil society institutions during the 1990s has greatly facilitated this process, which needs to be supported by external financing. The Bank has begun such dialogue and collaboration with the support of the Norwegian Education Trust Fund, but needs to intensify its efforts.

Matching lending strategies to country conditions

Improved portfolio performance and results orientation will require the Bank to be selective about target countries, support, and conditions. Different country conditions will require different assistance strategies (box 4.5). Sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies, a demonstrated commitment to good governance, a clearly specified sector policy framework, and readiness and capacity to implement the often difficult policy decisions associated with education and financial policy reforms must be prerequisites for large-scale Bank investments in education.

In countries that meet these conditions, the Bank is ready to provide budget support under cofinancing arrangements or in close coordination with the support provided by other external financiers and NGOs. In many cases the Bank will be able to support broad sector development strategies over a long period through adaptable program loans. Such loans provide a framework for lending operations based on clearly agreed benchmarks and triggers over a period as long as 10 years.
### Box 4.5

**Bank Support under Different Country Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Priorities for Bank Support</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1:</strong> Sound economic policies, good governance, well-designed sector policy framework, adequate absorptive capacity</td>
<td>Convening external financiers, transferring resources, monitoring implementation experience, providing advice and guidance based on international experience</td>
<td>Sector development programs, budget support, adaptable program loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 2:</strong> Sound economic policies, good governance, well-designed sector policy framework, limited absorptive capacity</td>
<td>Providing intensive support for capacity building as a first step toward large-scale financing, participating in partnerships for long-term support, supporting service delivery by communities, private providers, and NGOs</td>
<td>Adaptable program loans with strong institutional triggers for phase 2, specific investments with capacity-building objectives, institutional development grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 3:</strong> Sound economic policies, good governance, inadequate sector policy framework, limited absorptive capacity</td>
<td>Transferring knowledge and ideas, supporting analytical work and policy experiments, building capacity and improving service delivery by communities, private providers, and NGOs</td>
<td>Nonlending services such as sector work, workshops, and study visits; financial support through learning and innovation loans or specific investments in support of larger-scale policy experiments and capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 4:</strong> Weak economic policies, poor governance, undefined sector policy framework, limited absorptive capacity</td>
<td>Supporting reformers with a long-term vision, helping to create the knowledge they need for effective development, engaging civil society in this process</td>
<td>Small, specific investment loans, learning and innovation loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 5:</strong> Post-conflict situations</td>
<td>Supporting reconstruction, capacity building, and long-term policy development and implementation; collaborating with agencies providing emergency relief</td>
<td>Grants, specific investment loans, learning and innovation loans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Few African countries have in place all the conditions required for successful large-scale budget support for education development. Several countries have improved macroeconomic management and governance, but the framework for education policy reforms often remains unspecified. Even more often, countries have insufficient capacity to implement needed reforms and absorb large-scale external assistance.

In countries with clearly specified sector policy frameworks but weak institutions and limited implementation capacity, it may still be possible to support a sector investment program or a long-term subsector program supported by an adaptable program loan, provided an institutional development program is clearly agreed and implemented up front. Institutional development benchmarks would then trigger larger-scale financial support.

Where the direction of policy reform is unclear or unsustainable, the transfer of knowledge and experience becomes an additional task to tackle in conjunction with capacity building. But the absence of a clearly agreed policy framework will preclude designing an adaptable program loan. Instead, a learning and innovation loan or a more traditional investment loan will be the best vehicle for supporting innovation and policy development.

Sound economic policies are a necessary condition of sustainable education development. Even with a well-designed sector policy framework and implementation capacity, a country may have such a weak macroeconomic environment that broad support for education is unlikely to succeed. Though there may still be opportunities for the Bank to provide support, under such conditions the priority must be sharing knowledge and ideas rather than financing large projects. It may be possible for the Bank to work with potential reformers, to pilot innovations, and to lay the foundation for rapid progress once macroeconomic conditions improve. In many cases NGOs and communities will be key partners in these efforts.

In countries emerging from civil war or unrest, investing in education has a vital role to play in the transition to peace. In the short term countries emerging from conflict often require quick responses to help restart the delivery of education services. Emergency interventions implemented in collaboration with a range of actors, which may include government, United Nations agencies, NGOs, and communities, will typically be needed to rehabilitate physical infrastructure and provide emergency supplies. At the same time, such operations should support the long-term resumption of normal operations in the education sector, recognizing the continuum between relief and development.

The Bank must work more deliberately to help prevent conflict and to assist countries emerging from conflict. Confronting equity issues—especially in education—is often an important preventive measure, given the role of inequalities in fomenting violent conflict. Where the Bank is forced to withdraw from a country, it may be able to protect aspects of its education portfolio through more active collaboration with humanitarian agencies and NGOs. The Africa Region is preparing a paper that reviews issues and strategies for supporting countries in conflict and post-conflict countries in the social sectors, including education.

Support for education development—in terms of public spending and lending opportunities—should be explicitly discussed in the country assistance strategies prepared by the Bank in collaboration with country authorities. In many countries education should be a key element in the macroeconomic policy dialogue. This has not been always the case. Often fiscal targets have been set—particularly under adjustment programs—without proper consideration of the need to protect priority social investments. Increasingly, it is recognized that choices about the allocation of public resources and targeting of Bank resources cannot be decided solely at the sectoral level, and that these choices are a key part of national resource allocation decisions and country assistance strategies.
The Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework provides a powerful analytical tool to address these social and economic development issues in concert, in the context of country-led partnerships. The introduction of national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, which will enable countries to set poverty reduction goals as a basis for collaboration with the Bank, is an important step toward implementing this approach on the ground. Similarly, the replacement of the International Monetary Fund's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility by the new Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility will further help create education development strategies consistent with and supported by wider macroeconomic reforms.

In countries where the absence of a credible education development strategy jeopardizes overall prospects for development, education development should be at the center of the macroeconomic policy dialogue, especially in the context of issues of competitiveness and poverty reduction. In such countries the Bank will not be able to lend for education development, but it may have to consider progress in education development as a key factor in determining total Bank assistance. Conversely, where an effective and efficient education program is integrated in the macroeconomic development framework, the Bank can help develop the necessary medium- and long-term public expenditure frameworks and mobilize external resources.

**Applying state-of-the-art knowledge**

Much has been learned about what works in education development (see chapter 3). There is a growing body of knowledge on the key elements of effective instruction, on organizational arrangements for efficient service delivery, and on strategies for ensuring equitable access. Yet in many cases program strategies and project components do not reflect the latest technical knowledge. The main issues—poor quality, insufficient and inequitable access, weak institutions, and inadequate and poorly used resources—are well-known and discussed in almost every project concept document and project appraisal document.

But these diagnoses often are not grounded in thorough sector analysis that addresses economic, financial, educational, and institutional issues. Nor are they often translated into operational interventions. Sector investment programs typically should be based on public expenditure reviews before they can address social sector spending and fiscal sustainability. And meeting equity and efficiency objectives requires a more detailed analysis of subnational and school-level variation. Moreover, the Bank cannot expect to play a credible partnership role, let alone exercise leadership in external support programs, if it cannot provide the first-rate technical knowledge that clients demand and deserve.

Nevertheless, several issues require more analytical work and review of experience. These include the uses of education technology and sector-wide approaches (see boxes 4.3 and 4.4), Bank support in post-conflict settings, skill development (box 4.6), secondary education, and strategies for institutional development and quality improvement. Reviews of education technology, quality improvement, and post-conflict support are under way; work on skill development is about to start; and work on secondary education is scheduled for fiscal 2002. A work program for institutional development and capacity building is being prepared.

Within the Bank, the Africa Region will collaborate with the Development Economics Vice Presidency, the World Bank Institute, and the Human Development Network Education Team to ensure that Africa-specific knowledge is generated and disseminated. Work has started on the design of early childhood programs, strategies to improve teaching and learning, documentation of good practice in support of private education, and more effective approaches to capacity building. In addition, education staff will need to build their understanding of effective adult basic education programs and post-conflict interventions as well as
Box 4.6

Building a Knowledge Base for Skill Development

Bank lending for education and training has supported skill development at the post-basic level through “practical” subjects in secondary curricula, specialized secondary technical schools, and vocational training institutes. The performance of this technical and vocational training portfolio has been disappointing. A 1990 Bankwide review recommended stronger justification for public funding and evidence of labor market demand for the skills.

Partly in response to this policy work, Bank investments in Sub-Saharan Africa for technical and vocational training—once the mainstay of the education portfolio—declined in the 1990s to less than 6 percent of lending for education and training. Yet clients are requesting more lending and nonlending assistance for technical and vocational training, in part because of the illusion that training can solve youth unemployment. Other reasons for the rising demand include concerns about low productivity, personnel shortages (exacerbated by the AIDS crisis), and more demand for further education and training from basic education graduates. Because of the lack of analysis and consensus around these issues, the Bank has found it difficult to rebuild its technical and vocational training portfolio.

The Africa Region’s knowledge base on technical and vocational training is weak. Knowledge of recent experience with technical and vocational training in Africa or from other parts of the world has not been updated. The Bank has gathered little evidence on the effectiveness of innovations introduced in the 1990s: consolidation of training authorities, establishment of labor market information systems, support for private training providers, use of vouchers and training funds, and support for training for the informal sector.

The Bank plans a regional review of technical and vocational training in 2000-01 to examine the performance of its portfolio, explore individual country cases, highlight and assess sector issues, and collect international and regional experience to form a solid knowledge base for dialogue with clients. DFID, ILO, and UNESCO have expressed interest in collaborating in the review. Key questions will be: What best practices are suggested by recent experience in Africa and elsewhere under a variety of circumstances? What advice should the Bank give to support the development of country technical and vocational training strategies? Specific questions include the impact of labor market policies on training needs, the effectiveness of supply-side interventions, the implications of different curriculum choices in formal education, the outcomes of reforms in training provision, the role of private training markets and enterprise training, the effectiveness of training for the informal sector and entrepreneurship, and lessons learned in using different financing mechanisms.

explore options for improving skill development programs and math and science education in secondary schools.

The Africa Region’s capacity-building efforts will give high priority to developing the analytical skills of its borrowers and staff. Links with other education units in the Bank are being strengthened to ensure that the best of the Bank’s knowledge is available to task managers. Except for emergency operations, sector unit managers will be expected to ensure that every investment and adjustment operation is grounded in a strong sector analysis and reflects the best available technical knowledge. Learning and innovation loans and
similar operations will be expected to include provisions for sector analysis as needed.

**Enhancing technical skills and knowledge**

The proposed action program will require the Africa Region to draw on high-quality internal expertise for policy discussions, sector analysis, and operational work. For this purpose, the region needs an appropriate mix of economists, education specialists, and staff with specialized skills in areas such as institutional analysis and implementation. It also requires a good mix of experienced staff and younger staff eager to experiment and innovate.

At the moment the region is suffering from a severe shortage of experienced task managers who can conduct effective policy dialogue, contribute state-of-the-art technical knowledge, and lead teams of highly qualified specialists. Unless staffing issues are addressed immediately, the Bank will not be able to play its potential role in the education sector. Increasing technical and operational knowledge about education in Africa is central to the success of the proposed action program. Achieving this goal will require:

- Intensifying efforts in the region to hire staff—from inside and outside the Bank—ranging from top-quality, experienced staff to promising young talent.
- Making explicit arrangements with senior staff to mentor and coach less-experienced colleagues.
- Implementing an Africa-specific staff development program.

Staffing issues will be the central concern of human development sector management team in the Africa Region. Strategies will be developed in collaboration with the Education Sector Board.

In addition, it will be important to strengthen the knowledge base for sector work and policy dialogue. This will require first establishing an effective knowledge management system for education in the region, with close links to the Bankwide education knowledge management system. Second, the Bank will have to incorporate the knowledge and experience of African and international specialists and institutions, including other donors, and internalize the lessons of experience. The policy analyses and reviews of experience referred to above are expected to make an important contribution to this process.

The region will also move aggressively to explore with borrowers the most promising applications of traditional and distance education technologies to enhance the delivery of education at all levels of the system. In many parts of the world new technologies—especially those that are Internet based—are changing traditional patterns of teaching and learning, broadening opportunities for access to education beyond the basic cycle, and creating an environment for lifelong learning for many more people (see box 4.3).

The Bank has initiated and will continue to develop a number of promising activities, including the African Virtual University (see box 3.13), World Links (see box 3.3), and continuing education through distance technologies (see boxes 3.5 and 3.10). The technical feasibility and educational value added of several of these innovations have been established. The challenge is to take these to scale and establish their financial viability in the face of intensifying competition for scarce education resources. The Bank will issue in 2001 a best practice paper on new technologies in African education. A distance education specialist is expected to join the Africa Region. Several countries are ready to pilot new technologies to address the old challenges of quality and access.

Even under the best circumstances, improving the analytical underpinnings of lending operations, adopting more participatory approaches to project development, and making implementation support more effective will be costlier than the traditional way of doing business. To move forward, the Africa Region must think of ways to implement the strategy described above in an
increasingly budget-constrained environment. As noted, borrowers will need to take more responsibility for managing these tasks. Bank staff will need to learn to identify areas where they can add the most value.

But perhaps the most important challenge will be to provide effective assistance for designing and implementing institutional development and capacity-building strategies. Often this support will require addressing public sector management issues—such as low salaries and compressed pay scales—that go beyond the education sector. But in many cases considerable improvements can be realized even within these existing macro-constraints through more rational resource allocations, improved financial management and accountability systems, revision of personnel management related to deployment and redeployment of staff, outsourcing of services and contracting of non-civil service providers, more effective work procedures, better people management, and targeted incentives. To work effectively in this area, the Bank will strengthen its capacity for analysis and dialogue by:

• Increasing the number of staff with specialist skills.
• Working with staff from other agencies and governments to synthesize experience and identify successful approaches.
• Training a core group of staff in analytical methods, policy issues, and development strategies.
• Making an institutional analysis and development strategy with clear benchmarks a mandatory part of the project appraisal document, similar to economic and financial analysis.

A Commitment to Act

The Bank is determined to do whatever it can to help countries in Africa reverse past trends and avert Oxfam’s projection that three-quarters of the world’s 70 million out-of-school children will be African by 2015. It will help develop the knowledge, build the commitment, and take the actions needed to achieve universal primary education by 2015 in every country in the region that is ready to move forward. With an increasingly strong foundation, the system will be able to provide opportunities to poor children—especially girls—to continue their education beyond the basic level. The Bank will also support country policies that move provision at this level toward equity, quality, and sustainability.

To achieve these goals, the Bank will work with public and private providers and other stakeholders. It will build a cadre of economists and technical specialists with the experience and knowledge to provide the high-quality service that clients deserve. And it will strengthen the knowledge base for policy advice and investment in the sector.

The Africa Region will implement the following actions in fiscal 2001-02:

• Strengthen the capacity for institutional analysis by recruiting at least one additional institutional development specialist, training and mentoring staff interested in this area, and starting to review experience.
• Strengthen the technical review of economic and sector work and lending operations and coordinate knowledge work on secondary education and skill development.
• Promote the participation of all staff in the professional development program offered by the Institute for Development Studies.
• Establish a professional education presence in the field office of every country with a significant Bank-supported education project.
• Make business procedures more participatory, flexible, and conducive to community participation.
• Establish clear standards for quality at entry and support task managers in meeting these standards.
• Build knowledge and document good practice in key areas: education technology, primary
classroom construction, adult basic education, skill development, secondary education, and strategies for quality improvement.

Conclusion

Since the publication of the Bank’s 1988 education sector strategy for the Africa Region (World Bank 1988), the African development context has changed dramatically. As the 21st century begins, democratization and a resumption of economic growth in many countries hold out the promise of a better future for the region. At the same time, Africa faces sobering development challenges. More than 200 million people live in extreme poverty, and Africa has so far been excluded from many of the economic benefits of globalization. Higher-level skills are a prerequisite for participation in the global knowledge economy. This challenge must be met in the context of AIDS, conflict, high fertility, indebtedness, and weak governance, all of which threaten to thwart poverty elimination efforts.

Substantial and sustainable improvements in the quality of life of all Africans depend on confronting the underlying causes of poverty. Foremost among these causes is the region’s low educational enrollment and attainment. Ten years after Jomtien, more than 40 million children are not in primary school, and a third of the children who enroll drop out before having acquired basic literacy skills. Closing the education gap in Africa must be treated as a matter of urgency. Without accelerated education development toward the 2015 target, Africans will be condemned to repeat the vicious development cycle of the past 20 years.

The disappointments of the past need to be set against the opportunities for change. The prospects for accelerating Africa’s education development are far better than they were 10 years ago. Promising new country-led reforms and innovations are going forward in a range of contexts. Donors, including the World Bank, are recognizing the need to work in partnership with governments and civil society, providing comprehensive and flexible support that complements national efforts.

The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar was an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to working with African governments and civil society to accelerate the development of basic education in the region. To back up this commitment, the President of the World Bank pledged at this conference that no developing country that comes up with a good plan to accelerate progress toward the 2015 goal of education for all will lack Bank support.

Taking advantage of these new opportunities will require fundamental reform of education financing and management. For many countries, nothing short of a quantum leap in education is required to meet the development needs of the 21st century. For its part, the Bank needs to do more and do it better. The Bank must be more strategic and selective, matching knowledge and finance to country needs. Taking risks, engaging in ongoing dialogue, and learning by doing need to become integral to the Bank’s way of working if long-term partnerships are to succeed.

Millions of Africans living in poverty have paid a heavy price for the slow progress toward the Jomtien vision of education for all. Governments and donors share responsibility for achieving a break with the past. Africa cannot afford to fail in its efforts to accelerate education development. As the Comprehensive Development Framework states, “all agree that the single most important key to development . . . is education.” The collective challenge is to ensure that Africa’s development outcomes reflect this consensus over the coming decade.
Bibliography


Without rapid and substantial improvements in education access and quality, broader poverty reduction efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa will be thwarted. *A Chance to Learn: Knowledge and Finance for Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* argues that at the cusp of the 21st century, the opportunity to address the often intractable problems of education in Sub-Saharan Africa is perhaps greater than at any time in the past two decades. Economic growth has resumed in many countries; the political commitment to education development is strong; and new democracies have created a more favorable environment for the participation of civil society and communities in policy formulation and program implementation. Also, information and communication technology offer new opportunities to overcome the constraints of distance and time. Finally, increased debt relief and stronger international partnerships in favor of education will help ease the financing constraints on accelerating education development.

This book proposes a strategy and a program of action for the World Bank’s Africa Region, which is striving to support countries in their efforts to accelerate education development. It summarizes the challenges facing education development in Africa, suggests key elements of country responses, discusses the implications of these responses, and proposes actions for improving the Bank’s effectiveness as a partner in education development. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for future increases of World Bank support for education development in Africa.