

Third AGEPA Meeting, Dakar 16-18 May 2006

Opening Remarks by Jee-Peng Tan

Excellency, dear participants and resource persons. It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to say a few words at the occasion of the third AGEPA seminar.

I am particularly pleased to see here not only colleagues from Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal, but also from Benin, Guinea and Burkina Faso, three other countries that are ready to join the initiative.

I also want to recognize the participation of my WB colleagues as well as staff from partner agencies, who have worked closely with us on AGEPA. These include the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Pôle de Dakar, AFD and the Coopération Française. Furthermore, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the representatives from our partner agencies participating in the workshop: AfDB, CONFEMEN, UNICEF, UNESCO, CIDA and DANIDA. I wish to thank the government of Norway, France and Ireland for their sustained financial support for AGEPA since the start of this work in 2003.

The number of participating countries and partner agencies illustrates how AGEPA is beginning to move from a pilot experience to an activity that is in the mainstream of national sector development. This is a critically important development. Progress towards the EFA objectives and the MDGs depends critically on the design and implementation of “credible” sector development programs. But without improvement in education sector management many countries are likely to remain off-track, with little hope of reaching the Dakar goals by 2015. This is where I hope AGEPA will make its contribution.

It is particularly encouraging to see how AGEPA is feeding into broader international efforts. Of particular importance is the collaboration that has been established with the CONFEMEN. The recently held meeting of the CONFEMEN in Madagascar had as its theme strengthening education sector management, with a special emphasis on issues of governance, decentralization, resource mobilization and textbook provision. At that meeting Madagascar shared its AGEPA experience.

To recall, the AGEPA project is an effort supported to help countries address two central issues in education management:

- consistency and equity in the distribution of public resources across schools; and
- effectiveness in the transformation of resources into schooling outcomes.

Following the program launch workshop three years ago in Madagascar a follow-up workshop brought together the same country teams in 2004 in Nouakchott to:

- present their action plan for management improvement;
- benefit from cross-country exchange; and
- receive inputs from an international panel of experts to improve their plans.

While the action plans on which each country team has worked since the Madagascar workshop are country-specific, they share the following common elements:

- job descriptions system (e.g. teacher, headmaster, district office...) and
- operational tools for each actor (e.g. lesson planning, budget tracking, student attendance);
- tools for administration of the school follow-up plans in system (school report cards)
- tools for governance accountability at school level (i.e. school council, school report cards)

The participating countries have been supported by follow-up missions by staff from the World Bank and the “Pôle de Dakar”.

This workshop is designed to take stock of the progress that has been achieved since the Nouakchott workshop with the development and testing of the instruments. I hope that the lessons from these experiences will allow the “new” countries to make rapid progress as they move to develop and implement their own action plans. In addition we will also have the opportunity to learn from the experience of Mauritania with the development of instruments designed to support regional planning and the experience of Madagascar in using a methodology for evaluating the impact of AGEPA.

At the end of the day, the success of AGEPA will be determined by the way the instruments developed are being used by administrators and other stakeholders in their efforts to improve student learning. We have therefore included in the program an opportunity to discuss with Senegalese school administrators and school directors their perspectives on education management.

I hope that the exchange of the experience and the round table discussion with Senegalese educators will help the participants to update existing action plans or develop new ones as the case may be. We from our side will do everything we can to support your efforts.

As Senegal is our host country, I would like to close my speech with a Senegalese proverb, which says

Ndank-ndank mooy japp golo ci nyaay.

Little by little, one catches the monkey in the jungle.

We have come a long way since the first workshop in Madagascar in 2003 and I hope that the Dakar workshop marks another step in “catching the monkey”, i.e. in improving education management to reach the EFA goals.

THANK YOU